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Eileen Alanna; or, The Dawning of the Day.

BY DENNIS O'SULLIVAN.

CHAPTER I.

THE DARK STRANGER APPEARS TO EILEEN ALANNA.

On the banks of the River Shannon, away in an Irish valley, stands the old homestead of the McMahons.

This old house was the scene of many a joyous merry-making in days gone by.

It was in this place that Eileen McMahon and her twin sister, Kathleen, lived at the opening of our story. And a happy home it had been to those beautiful, loving, light-hearted girls, for they were blessed with good parents and kindly neighbors.

They had no brothers to protect them from insult or wrong, or to tease and annoy them; but they had lovers in plenty, as there was not a young man in the neighborhood that did not cast his eye on one or the other of the winsome girls.

It is night in the old homestead; the light is burning on the mantel-piece; the fire is blazing away in the grate, and the old folks are seated near the hearth talking of old times, of their children, and of their prospects in life.

There was an air of peace and comfort about everything in the room; and even the dog that lay stretched before the fire seemed to enjoy the scene.

Yes, joy and happiness seemed to reign in the house of the McMahons; and yet it was only in the seeming, for a dark cloud was about to break on that bright home—a cloud that was destined to spread much sorrow and misery over it.

The old folks sat before the blazing fire, and they heard the rumbling of the storm that was breaking on the hills above.

They knew that it would soon sweep down into the valley; yet, old as they were, they did not fear its approach, for their old homestead had withstood many a rude blast, and they were at peace with God and man.

And then the old folks heard the voices of their merry daughters in the kitchen beyond, as they hummed some old melodies, or indulged in harmless jokes and pleasantries at the expense of their neighbors.



"GOD BLESS YOU, MY DARLING, I KNOW YOU ARE TRUE."

"The lads will not be here to-night, I'm thinking, Daniel," remarked Mrs. McMahon, as she listened to the storm raging outside.

"And what would hinder them?" returned her husband; "you don't suppose a blast of wind and a few drops of rain would keep them away. Faith, that wasn't the way in my young days."

"Indeed, no," retorted the wife, with a roguish smile. "You wouldn't stay away if it was pouring. You came too often to be wholesome, Daniel."

"Once too often, for my own sake," cried the husband, as he pulled away at his pipe; "and that was the night I went to make you my wife. 'Twas the most unwholesome journey I ever took."

"Was it, indeed?" returned the matron. "Faith, 'twas many a better man would be willing to make that same journey on his bare knees."

"And curse his luck after that he didn't break them," laughed the husband, "before he got half the way."

"'Twas a lucky journey for you, ye rascal," cried the matron, as she pretended to get angry; "and one that you never had any cause to regret."

"Faith, I might have gone farther and fared worse," said the husband, determined to have the last word. "But listen to the blast, Kathleen. God help the poor wanderer that's abroad this night, and no refuge near."

"I'd sooner be listening to the song that Eileen is singing," returned the mother, as she bent her ear to catch the sound of the voice that arose in the inner room. "Hist! will you? She always sings that air when the storm is abroad. God forbid that it should ever be her own misfortune."

Thus appealed to, the man smoked his pipe in silence, while out on their ears burst the clear, melodious and pathetic voice of their daughter, Eileen, as she sang the following:

MAGGIE MACHREE.

My Maggie was winsome,
My Maggie was fair,
And her voice rang as
clear as the lark's in
the air;

Till a stranger came
down in our valley
one day,
Then the light in my dar-
ling's eye faded away.

Oh, a lanna machree,
a lanna machree,
My old heart is aching
and breaking for
thee.

Oh, Maggie, my darling,
'tis happy I'd be,
Sleeping Death's sleep in
the cold earth with
thee;

But I swore on your
green grave—venge-
fully swore
To hunt the dark stran-
ger the wide world o'er.

Oh, a lanna machree,
a lanna machree!
'Tis happy I'd be in
the cold grave with
thee.

Oh, Maggie, a lanna, 'tis
rest I'll ne'er know,
Till I've slain the dark
stranger who caused us
such woe.

"Tis then I'll come back from the land o'er the sea,
To lay my old bones in the churchyard with thee.
Oh, a lanna* machree, a lanna machree!
When I slay the dark stranger I'll rest here with thee.

The song of the young girl was listened to with intense interest by the old folks at the fireside.

Still the storm raged on the hills outside; and now the whistling wind came down in the valley, swept across the river, and through the tall trees in the woods and groves.

And yet the old people paid little heed to the raging of the storm without.

They were thinking of their fair girls in the room within, and praying that no "dark stranger" would ever come down in that valley to blight their young lives.

"What would you do, Daniel," muttered the woman, "if any misfortune ever came upon our a lannas?"

The brow of the old man darkened, and his voice was husky, as he replied:

"I'm afraid, Kathleen, that I'd kill the dark strangers, aye, though they had a thousand lives, if they ever crossed the paths of my children. God forgive me for talking so on this wild night. But what put such a notion into your head at all? Sure no harm can ever come to our colleens. They are promised to the worthy lads of the Fitzgeralds at the Cross above. And I hope we'll soon be dancing a jig at the double wedding. Whist! I hear some one outside now. 'Tis the decent lads through all the storm."

As the old man spoke he rose from his seat and advanced to the door.

At that moment a fierce blast of wind swept against the house, causing the doors and windows to rattle, and then the door flew open.

The words of welcome were on the old man's tongue, as a tall figure was seen at the door; but, the next moment he started back exclaiming:

"In the name of God, who have we here this stormy night. But, sir, I beg your pardon. You took me by surprise. I expected some friends. Yet friends and strangers are ever welcome at the house of Daniel McMahon, especially on such a pelting night as this. Come to the fire, sir, and fling off your dripping coat.

As the old man spoke he held out his hand to the stranger and drew him into the room.

"Excuse my intrusion," said the stranger, as he approached the fire. "But the fact is, I have met with an accident, or I might say, a series of accidents. I am benighted, now, and hunted at that. Can I find here a shelter—a bed for the night. I am weary and wounded, and I am not able to proceed further. I throw myself on your generosity—your kind hospitality."

The stranger spoke in a low voice, in a manner that seemed hurried and half frightened, while the glances that he cast back into the storm showed that he feared pursuit.

"A stranger hunted, weary and wounded," cried old McMahon, as he bustled round his uninvited guest. "A strong recommendation to our hospitality, sir. It is evident that you are a stranger in Ireland, or you might know that either one would be sufficient. Sit down by the fire, sir. Call the girls, wife, and see to making the stranger comfortable."

"Not here, not here," cried the stranger, in the same agitated voice, while his eyes sought the doors and windows as if to indicate that the room was too public.

The old man looked at the stranger for a moment; and then he turned to his wife.

When their eyes met each knew what was passing in the mind of the other.

This man was flying from vengeance—public or private.

He came among them at a moment when they were speaking of a dark stranger, and praying that no ill would befall their handsome girls.

Each felt that the visitor would bring sorrow and trouble to their happy home; and each wished him far away on that stormy night.

Yet he was here now; and they could not turn him out in the pelting rain and cutting blasts.

He was hunted and wounded, and they must give him shelter and help for the night.

Such is the law of hospitality among all generous people, and the McMahons carried it out to the letter.

The stranger's nervous eye had noted the expressive glances that passed between the husband and wife; and, flinging aside the cap that covered his head, he pointed to a wound on his forehead, as he exclaimed:

"Do you refuse me a shelter—a hiding-place it must be. I am sorely wounded, and if you turn me out, my death will be on your heads. Don't ask me now what my crime was. Even now my enemies may be riding up the road in quest of me. Save me, and I will reward you. Betray me, and the curse of God will be on you."

"Stay! stay!" cried the old man, as he lifted his hand in a warning manner. "Do not speak of curses under this roof. Nor must you ever breathe a syllable about rewards. We had no thought of sending you out into that storm. You will have shelter and safety, though you had killed my nearest friend. But listen to me one moment. I belong to a race, each member of which is ever warned whenever any misfortune is about to befall his family. I have received this warning to-night—within this very hour. Woe be to you if you betray my hospitality. Kathleen, call the girls, and prepare bandages and food for the stranger. I will see him to the upper room. And remember, wife, that none in this house will say a stranger has sought shelter here to-night, no matter what happens."

As the old man concluded his warning, he lifted the coat and cap of the stranger, and motioned him to follow.

At this moment merry peals of laughter came from the inner apartment, and, ere the stranger had moved a step from the fire-place, out into the room sprang the winsome twin sisters—Eileen and Kathleen.

Two screams of astonishment from the blushing girls, as they stood in all their innocent beauty in the glare of the light, a frown from the father, a warning glance from the mother, and the dark stranger is gazing at the twins.

And two such splendid specimens of womanhood it had never been his fortune to behold.

Though they were dressed in the plain costumes worn by the farmers' daughters of Ireland, they appeared to as good advantage as if they had been arrayed in silks and satins.

As the stranger looked from one to the other, he was struck with the remarkable resemblance between the twin sisters.

The man's glance was ardent, yet respectful; and, as he stood there by the fire gazing with admiration on the beautiful girls, he seemed to forget that he was wounded and weary and a fugitive seeking a hiding-place.

He appeared to be like one in a waking dream; but that dream did not last long.

The voice of Daniel MacMahon fell on his ears to remind him of his situation.

"Come, sir," was the old man's salutation. "I am waiting to show you to the room where you can spend the night in safety. Girls, assist your mother in tending to this gentleman's wants. The sooner, sir, your wound is dressed, the better it will be for you."

The stranger took the hint, and bowing courteously to the mother and daughters, he followed his host from the room.

While the stranger stood by the fire-place gazing at the two sisters, the latter scarcely lifted their eyes to look at him.

But when the father spoke of the wound, their womanly sympathies were aroused, and they raised their eyes to gaze at his pale face and the ugly wound on his forehead.

As he left the room they noticed the courtly bow with which he saluted them; and they did not fail to see that his walk was as graceful as his bow.

"Who is he, mother? What brought him here? How did he get that wound in his head?"

cried the impulsive Eileen, the moment the stranger had left the room.

"You ask me too much, Eileen," replied her mother, with a sigh, as she turned to the fire. "All I know, is that he is a stranger flying from danger, and that he will leave here at the dawn of the morning. Your father's commands are, that his coming here shall never be mentioned to any one—no matter what may happen to-night. Set about getting warm water, and bandages, and tea at once. And don't ask me any more questions, either of you, about this man."

Kathleen, who was of a demure turn of mind, made no effort to find out from her mother about the stranger, though she could not help feeling a strange curiosity as regards such a strange visitor.

But the impetuous Eileen was not to be put off by a first refusal.

There was a halo of romance, of deep mystery about this dark stranger; and she was not to be baulked in her endeavors to find out all she could about him—and have a good talk about him at that.

Eileen was her mother's favorite, her darling a lanna.

She was wild and impetuous, full of frolic and glee, outspoken and fearless, a little romp, perhaps, but for all that, she was the mother's favorite.

Kathleen, on the other hand, was of a timid and retiring nature, save when aroused by ingratitude or wrong, and then she could show more spirit than her sister.

"Now, mother," cried Eileen, as she placed her hand lovingly about her parent's neck. "Don't be cross. We are dying to know all about the stranger. Do tell us, and I'll fly away in a jiffy to get the things ready. Can't I coax you, mother darling. I could not sleep to-night if I didn't know all about him. Won't you tell us?"

"Stay awake, then," sang out the father, in harsh tones, as he entered the room. "One would suppose that you'd be troubled about the absence of Maurice Fitzgerald to-night, instead of bothering your head about this black stranger. Do what you were told, and then go to your beds, the pair of you. I wish I had shut the door in the fellow's face. I don't like the way he came among us at all."

The father was in bad humor, and Eileen did not dare speak another word.

The two girls hastened to obey the father's command, and neither of them spoke of the stranger again in his presence; but, oh! they did keep up a good deal of thinking.

CHAPTER II.

"GOD BLESS YOU, DARLING, I KNOW YOU ARE TRUE."

THE stranger is resting his weary limbs in the room to which he was conducted by old Daniel McMahon.

Eileen and Kathleen have retired to their sleeping-room; but not to slumber.

Such a thing was not to be thought of for hours to come, after the visit of such a mysterious person.

The question uppermost in their minds was, who could he be, and how did he happen to get benighted and wounded on that tempestuous night?

'Tis more than passing strange that those loving girls scarcely alluded to the fact that their affianced husbands had not paid them a visit that evening, though they were well aware that they had promised to do so; and they also knew that the brothers had been there on many an occasion when the storm king raged as fiercely.

And the old folks were seated by the blazing fire once more.

The storm was subsiding at this time; yet still the promised visitors did not make their appearance.

It was evident that the old people were still

* The words "a lanna," (sometimes written as one word) signifies "my child."

speaking of the stranger's unexpected visit, and of the crime which he had committed.

"He seems to be respectable, Daniel," remarked the woman; "and his clothes are of the best material. Did you notice what a soft, pleasing voice he had?"

"I noticed everything about him," replied the husband, "and I don't like him at all. He has an oily tongue; and his face is well enough, only for those eyes that would not look fairly into your own when he spoke to you. I wish he was well out of the house, for I feel it in my heart that he will give us trouble before we get rid of him."

"Nonsense, Daniel," said the wife. "You shouldn't be so superstitious. You're worse than a woman. He'll be able to move to-morrow; and that will be the last we'll ever see of him, good, bad, or indifferent."

"I hope so," muttered the man, as he looked towards the door. "But 'tis a wonder to me that the lads didn't come to-night. 'Tisn't very late yet, and the storm is going down very much. Who knows but that they'd be here yet. I'd give anything to see them. They may be able to tell us if anything happened in the neighborhood, or up at the village; and as I'm a sinner, there's some one outside."

As the man spoke he sprang from his seat, and advanced to the door with a welcome on his lips.

A sharp knock at the door, a cry of "come in, and welcome" from the old man, and a stalwart form dressed in the garb of a farmer, stood before him.

One glance at the face of the new comer, and the old farmer saw that he was fearfully excited.

"Why, Maurice," he cried, as his heart trembled within him at the thought of evil news. "What ails you at all? You look as if you saw a ghost up at the haunted bridge. What's the best word, man?"

"There's no good word at all, Mr. McMahon," replied the man, in agitated tones; "but all bad. There's been terrible work going on to-night. And I'm flying for my life. I haven't a minute to stay to bid you good-bye. Where's Eileen? I must say 'farewell' to her, before I leave her, perhaps forever."

There was a look of anguish on the man's manly face as he spoke these words; yet neither terror nor guilt was depicted there.

"What is wrong, Maurice?" inquired Mrs. McMahon, as she approached the young farmer and laid her hand on his shoulder.

"Call Eileen," and I'll tell you," was the somewhat impatient reply. "Forgive me, ma'am, if I'm hasty at all. But the bloodhounds are on my track, and I haven't a moment to spare. Where's Eileen from me? Where's my darling?"

"Here I am, Maurice," cried the young girl, as she sprang into the room, and flew into her lover's arms.

One fond embrace, and then she looked up into her lover's troubled face.

"What's the matter, Maurice?" she cried, "what has kept you away to-night? What has happened?"

"They charge me with killing a man, Eileen," was the reply. "But I'm as innocent as the child unborn. I must fly, my darling; and it may be long years ere I see you again."

"Killed a man—flying for your life, Maurice!" cried the young girl, as she clung closer to her lover. "Oh, this is terrible news, indeed. But you wouldn't hurt a child, Maurice. I know you are innocent, and that you will prove it. Don't run away, Maurice. They can't hurt you."

"Ah, Eileen," returned her lover, "that's the trouble, I can't prove my innocence. Listen a moment, darling. And you, my old, kind friends, sit down there, till I tell you what has happened. I won't waste any words, for I must be off."

With trembling hearts the father and mother took their places near the fire, while the daughter still clung lovingly to her agitated lover; and the look of confidence that beamed

on her bright young face was a great solace to him.

"You must know," the young man commenced, "that a stranger from America arrived at the village to-day. And who should it be but Tom McDermott—Black Tom we used to call him long ago, when we were boys all."

"He was so changed that not a soul in the village knew him; and he didn't want to be known either, as he wanted to see the old place and the friends, he said, without being bothered by too many troubling him."

"He always had a great liking for me when I was smaller than him at school; and I was the only one to whom he told his name, making me give him my hand and word that I'd keep his secret till he pleased to tell it himself."

"He told me that he made a fortune away in the gold mines of California, and that he came home here to spend some of it, and maybe take a wife back with him to America."

"Well, we went about together all day, and when evening came we went to the hotel, where he was stopping, as I intended to leave him there for the night, and come here with Gerald, and spend the evening with you all."

"As ill luck would have it, who should we meet in the tap-room but James Dunphy; and he knew Tom McDermott at once, for he saw him in America; but he didn't let on at the time, as he said afterwards he wanted to let Tom have his fling."

"James and Tom were never good friends. They quarreled at home here, and they quarreled in America."

"You know what a queer temper James always had; and how he and I fell out about Kathleen here."

"To make a long story as short as I can, the three of us went into a private room to have a drink together quietly, and we weren't there many minutes before a bickering commenced between Tom and Jim, in full earnest at that, for all I could say or do to put a stop to it."

The old folks were listening intently to the young man's story, while Eileen was also devouring every word.

"At last," continued Maurice Fitzgerald, "they both threw off all disguise, and grew so hot with each other that from words it got to blows, without my being able to prevent them."

"They struck away for a minute or so, and then James Dunphy lifted the pewter mug from the table, and flung it at Tom, striking him on the head, and sending him bleeding and reeling against the wall."

"Quick as lightning he sprang forward again, and I saw that something was gleaming in his hand; but before I could go between them, he struck James to the heart, and down he fell without as much as saying, 'Lord have mercy on me.'"

Eileen uttered a cry of horror, and the father and mother pressed their hands together, as they muttered words of astonishment and pity, while their eyes were involuntary turned up to the room where the unwelcome guest was lying.

Mother, father and daughter were now aware that the dark stranger had killed their old friend; but they had yet to learn how deeply the generous man before them became implicated in the crime.

"I was so thunderstruck," continued the young farmer, "when I saw James lying dead before me, that I couldn't speak or move, but stood looking from one to the other like one in a trance. Oh, it was the darkest moment of my life, but darker came after."

"I stooped down and took James' hand in my own, and I looked into his face. I knew that death was on him, for I had looked on death before."

"Then I turned to where the murderer was standing, to tell him to fly for his life; but he did not wait for my telling, he was already out of the room, leaving behind him the bloody knife on the floor near the dead man."

"He wasn't gone a moment, when he came into the room again, took a look at the dead man, grasped me by the hand and cried:

"Maurice, old friend, I didn't mean to kill

him, I was crazy after he struck me with the pewter, and I didn't know what I was doing at all. You won't betray me, old friend, will you?"

"Without thinking of the consequences, I pledged him my word of honor that I wouldn't. Pressing my hand once more, he was away out of the room, leaving me alone with the dead."

"It was then it flashed on me that I had done a foolish thing in giving my promise."

"That I should have denounced him for the crime, and have him punished. But the harm was done, and my word was pledged."

"'Tis little I thought that I would have to suffer so sorely for my friendship."

"'Tis little I dreamt that I would myself be accused of the murder."

"But you're innocent, Maurice," cried Eileen. "Who dares accuse you of killing James Dunphy?"

"Foolish boy," muttered the old farmer, who saw the ugly position in which the generous man was placed. "But it can't be helped now. Who accuse you of the crime?"

"When I called for help, and the people of the house came at my call, I saw at once that I was put down for the crime; for you must remember that poor James and I quarrelled about Eileen before; and that every one supposed that the stranger was in his own room all the time. Not one present suspected him of it."

"I saw at once the ugly scrape in which I was, and I couldn't see any way out of it but to fly at once."

"Nonsense, Maurice," cried the old man. "You should have stood your ground, and waited till the truth came out. Running away at the time would be strong evidence of your guilt."

"I thought of everything, sir," returned the young man, in passionate tones. "But I was so distracted I didn't know what to do."

"The first thing I did was to run to the stranger's room, and ask him to take the blame from me; but he wasn't there. And when I went to the stable below, I found that the horse he brought in the morning was missing."

"Then I knew that he had fled from the place, without once thinking that I would be suspected; for I don't believe he's villain enough to leave me in the lurch."

"Then the night was fearfully stormy, sir, and as some of the roads are in a bad state, I didn't know but that something would happen him. That he might lose his life in the dark, and then see what a nice fix I'd be in."

"I pledged him my word of honor that I wouldn't betray him. If he's living and finds that I'm accused of his crime, he'll come to the fore and clear me. If he's dead, I have no way of proving my innocence."

The distressed young man turned to the girl that stood beside him, and there was a look of agony on his face.

The old folks by the fire exchanged glances once more, and Daniel McMahon felt that he had been as rash in his promise of secrecy to his guest as had been the generous young man before him.

"God forgive me," he thought, "but I'm almost tempted to break my word to the dark stranger and put this lad out of suspense at once. But that I must not do, no matter what happens. I told the stranger that he would have shelter though he killed my nearest friend, and Daniel McMahon must not break his word. I can't see Maurice's way out of it to-night. In the morning all will be well. The stranger will open his lips, and the stain will be wiped away from the poor lad."

The impulsive Eileen, forgetting her father's command, put on a joyous expression of countenance, and was about to tell her lover of the stranger's presence in the house, when she saw the warning glance her father bent on her, and she felt that she must not open her lips on the subject for the present, though her heart was burning to dispel Maurice's doubts and fears.

Oh, how Eileen longed for the dawning of the day, in order that the dark clouds of the night might be dispelled.

Maurice Fitzgerald was so much absorbed with the trouble that was on him that he did

not notice the side-play going on between Eileen and her parents.

"So you see," continued the young man, "that I did not know what to do but fly from the village and seek my brother. I told him that I was in great trouble, and that I must fly at once. But I didn't tell him the particulars of what happened, nor mention anything about the stranger and his dark work at all."

The young man took Eileen's hand in his own as he continued, in solemn accents:

"I wouldn't tell you about it either, asthore, only I don't want you to think bad of me when I'm away in the distant land across the ocean, where I must go unless I want to face a felon's death here."

"Nonsense, Maurice," said the old man. "All will come right in the morning. The stranger from America will give himself up, and he must bear the penalty of the rash act."

"The stranger, sir," replied the young man, in a solemn tone of voice, "has paid the penalty already. We found his horse up by the bridge as we came along, and he must have been flung into the river, and swept away with the flood. There's nothing left for me but to fly to some other land. And, oh, Eileen Asthore, it breaks my heart to leave you. Will you come to me, darling, when I find a quiet home for you in the back woods of America? And will you be true?"

"I'll go to you anywhere Maurice," replied the girl, with a beaming smile. "And I'll be as true to you as a fond heart can be, yet don't be down hearted, Maurice. It may look dark to you now, but everything will be bright at the dawning of the day. And no matter what comes to you, I'll be true to you."

"God bless you, darling, I know you are true," cried the young man, in passionate tones, as he clasped the girl to his breast, and pressed his lips to hers.

Through the open door they could see the broad river, on whose waters a gallant ship was riding.

At that moment a shrill whistle was borne on the night air, and Maurice sprang to the door, exclaiming:

"That's Gerald's signal. He's stopping down by the old oak, to give the warning when the police are coming this way. Good-bye, darling, and God bless you once more."

The girl had followed him to the door to receive a last embrace, and assure him that all would be well on the morrow.

The last kiss was given, Maurice waved his hand to the old folks by the fire, and then he dashed out into the darkness.

CHAPTER III.

DAYS OF WAITING AND ANOTHER STORMY NIGHT.

It may appear strange that Kathleen, the twin sister, did not appear on the scene while Maurice was present relating the thrilling adventures of the night.

Was the young girl indifferent to the events transpiring? or was it that she had fallen asleep in her room?

Far from being indifferent, Kathleen was bursting with impatience to see her noble lover's brother, and to learn anything that he might have to tell about the strange guest.

As the two sisters were holding converse in their room, before retiring to bed, they heard the door open below, and the moment later they recognized Maurice's voice as he inquired for Eileen.

The impulsive Eileen, flinging ceremony aside, dashed down the stairs at once to meet her lover; but the more sedate Kathleen remained awhile, to take a look in the glass, adjust her hair and ribbons, and put on her most becoming smile of welcome.

Kathleen fully expected that Gerald Fitzgerald was down stairs with his brother.

Out on the stairs tripped the demure girl, while her heart was beating with joy at the prospect of meeting her lover.

When she reached the head of the stairs she

started back in surprise, and with difficulty suppressed a scream, for, standing behind the door, at the foot of the stairs, she beheld the dark stranger in the act of listening to the conversation going on in the sitting-room.

Though Kathleen was much surprised at discovering the man in the attitude of an eavesdropper, when she imagined that he was resting quietly in the room above, she had sufficient control over her emotions to refrain from betraying her presence on the stairs above.

More than this, she at once formed the resolution of playing the spy on the stranger, though this resolution was scarcely formed when it occurred to her that the nobler and more womanly course would be to pounce on him and denounce him for his unmanly and ungenerous conduct.

Kathleen, with all her demureness, had a fair share of humor, as well as mischief, in her composition, while the tincture of curiosity and romance in her nature impelled her to wait and learn, if possible, what the stranger meant by his unseemly behavior.

She was highly indignant, of course, that the man should thus repay the great kindness shown him, and she was determined to humble him at some future hour—aye, before he left her father's house in the morning.

"The base ingrate," thought the noble girl, "to play such a part after receiving shelter. But, thank goodness, there are no secrets in our family that the world may not know."

So the girl watched on, while the man listened behind the door, and she could see by the dim light that shone in from the room that he became deeply agitated as the moments flew by, and the words uttered by Maurice Fitzgerald fell on his ear.

He did not stir from his hearing-place until Maurice left the house in answer to his brother's warning signal.

Then he stole gently up the stairs, and Kathleen could hear him mutter, as he passed by the dark corner where she lay concealed, and so near as to touch her skirts:

"'Twas a narrow escape, an infernal narrow escape. But I'm all right now. Maurice Fitzgerald is a trump. I can sleep quietly till morning, without any fear of danger."

"What does all this mean?" thought the young girl. "You miserable hound, you've got Maurice into some scrape. But I'll soon know all about it. I took a dislike to that man the moment I saw him; and now I know that he's a contemptible scoundrel."

Kathleen heard the bed-room door above close on the eavesdropping stranger, and then, with flashing eyes and beating heart, she descended the stairs, to find Eileen in tears near the fire-place, and her father confronting a party of policemen.

"I'll believe your word, Mr. McMahon," said the sergeant, as Kathleen entered the room. "If you say that Maurice Fitzgerald is not in this house, I will not insult you by making a search for him."

"Maurice Fitzgerald is not in my house," replied the old man. "You are welcome to search every nook and corner for him."

As the old man spoke he encountered the appealing glance cast on him by Eileen.

The girl was praying that they would search the house, find the dark stranger, and thereby save her lover further annoyance or suspicion of crime.

The same prayer was passing through the mind of the old farmer, for a strange misgiving had come over him that the morning would not bring peace to his home, and that the man in the room above would not stand the test of friendship when his own life was in danger.

Yet his lips were sealed as to the presence of his guest; and his hope was that the sergeant would take him at his word, discover the stranger, and end the suspense of all.

But the officer would not search for Maurice in the house, once the honest farmer passed his word that he was not to be found there.

"Was he here to-night, Mr. McMahon?" inquired the officer.

"He was, sir," was the prompt reply.

"How long since?" was the next question.

"Within the last hour," replied Mr. McMahon, as promptly as before.

"Then we will have to go in quest of him elsewhere," said the sergeant. "Thank you, Mr. McMahon, for your prompt answers. And I am very sorry that your young friend has met with such a terrible misfortune. It has taken us all by surprise."

"It does not surprise me at all, sergeant," returned the sturdy old man, "as I do not believe a word of the charge against him; and you may believe me that he is as innocent of crime to-night as any one in this"—

The old man hesitated a second before finishing the sentence, as he thought of the guilty man up stairs, and of his plighted word that he would not betray him in any shape or form while he remained a guest.

"As any one in my family," was the partial amendment.

The officer did not pay any attention to the farmer's slip; and the next moment he was out at the head of his men, in further quest of the supposed murderer.

When the sound of the retreating footsteps could be heard no more, the old man closed the door, approached the fire-place, took his pipe, and sat down to ruminate; and not a sound broke the stillness that fell on that family party.

Each were busy with their own thoughts, and each felt that a cloud had fallen on their hitherto happy home.

They all realized that the stranger's presence had flung a shadow over them all, as well as over those they loved so dearly.

The head of the house was the first to break the silence, as he rose from his seat and stood in the center of the room.

"Wife and daughters," he commenced, "you know the man in the room above killed James Dunphy this evening. I pledged him my word that I would not betray him while under my roof, and I must keep that pledge."

Kathleen attempted to interpose, but her father commanded her to remain silent for the time.

"You know that Maurice Fitzgerald is accused of this murder, and that he cannot prove his innocence without betraying his word of honor, while this man does not release him from his pledge. The pledge that Maurice gave is binding on us, so long as that man remains under our roof. Let us pray to God that he will do a man's part in the morning, and confess his crime. Let us all go to bed now. I'm sick of this business to-night; and I would give every penny I'm worth, if the stranger had never darkened our doors. Let us pray that all be well on the morrow."

That prayer was fervently repeated by all.

Yet all was not right on the morrow; for when the day dawned the farmer sought his guest, and found him in a raging fever, and quite unconscious of what was passing round him.

Days and weeks passed away, and still the unwelcome guest lay unconscious in the room to which he had been consigned on the night of his arrival.

During this time each member of the worthy family vied with the other in their attention to the sick man.

In his days of misfortune, they did not think of the sorrow he had brought to them.

And faithfully did they keep the secret of the murder, though Maurice Fitzgerald was still a banned and hunted man, with a price set on his head.

At length the stranger recovered his consciousness; and very soon after the farmer told him of the position in which his intended son-in-law was placed, while he begged of his guest that he would publicly acknowledge the crime, thereby exonerating the innocent fugitive.

"My dear Mr. McMahon," replied the invalid, in an outburst of generous feeling, "I would sooner suffer a thousand deaths on the gallows than have Maurice Fitzgerald live under the charge of killing that man. As soon as I am able to move from here I will surrender myself to the officers of the law. In the meantime I will take measures to have my

old playmate brought back to his home. He will be a strong witness in my favor. He can testify that the dead man assaulted me first, and cut my head open with the pewter. Why, sir, that man drew a pistol on me in the States, and he would have taken my life, were it not that friends interfered. Out in California, no jury would convict me for killing him; but I suppose it will be hard with me here."

The man spoke so earnestly that the farmer and his family believed his every utterance. All save Kathleen.

She remembered his base act in playing the eavesdropper on the night of the murder; and, though, for reasons of her own, she had not mentioned the incident to any of her family, she could not rely on the word of a man who could be guilty of such baseness even in the hour of his own peril.

She argued that if he were a true man he would have then and there set matters right.

The stranger had a plausible tongue, and he was a thorough judge of human nature.

Another week passed by, and yet he took no steps to set the great wrong right.

Appealed to once more by the farmer, he said:

"Wouldn't it be just as well, sir, to wait until Maurice returns as it cannot be long till he's back now. My friends in New York will advertise for him in the Irish-American papers, and he must be here just as soon as possible after he hears I am living. If you think best I will give myself up this very day—this very hour. My life is in your hands. But I will stand a very poor chance unless Maurice is on hand as my witness. And it will have a fine effect, too, for me to surrender myself on the very day that Maurice returns to his home. Yet I have no option in the matter at all. It will be just as you say."

And thus from day to day, by such speeches, the oily stranger put off the promised retribution.

Soon after he was able to take exercise in the open air; and he moved around among the simple people without exciting the least suspicion that his hands were red with a fellow's blood.

He soon became a general favorite, for he could sing well, tell a good story, and he had plenty of money to spend.

It was rumored about the neighborhood that the dark-haired stranger was seeking a wife; and it must be remembered that during all this time he assumed the name of Dempsey, giving as his motives for so doing, when asked by Mr. McMahon, that he did not wish to be known by his real name until the day of his trial.

During all this time the stranger remained a guest of the McMahons much to the disgust of Gerald Fitzgerald, who shared in Kathleen's dislike of the man.

Gerald Fitzgerald had not heard from Maurice since the night of the murder; and his theory was that the fugitive had succeeded in making his way to America.

In the meantime, how fared it with our Eileen a Lanna, for it was by this endearing title she was now addressed by the members of her family.

Poor Eileen shed many tears every day for weeks after Maurice left his home, and, oh, how bitterly she hated the stranger during that time.

Each day she looked for the return of her lover—and each day she prayed that the stranger would leave her house, never to return again.

But gradually the feeling of dislike towards the man died away, and in its place arose one of pity and even admiration.

She saw this gay, dashing, handsome and wealthy stranger move around among the people, with a smile and good word for everyone; and yet she knew that he was but waiting her lover's return, in order to sacrifice himself to the gallows, or at least to long weary years of imprisonment.

Eileen would not explain it to herself, and she strove to battle against the feeling; but she

could no longer deny, that she was becoming infatuated with the dark stranger.

Oh, Maurice Fitzgerald, if you would save Eileen a Lanna, hasten back to the old land.

The toils of the charmer are closing in on her young heart, and it requires your presence to break them, or her heart will break.

And bravely did Eileen struggle against the feelings that were crowding on her, and growing stronger day by day.

"Oh, what would Maurice think," she would exclaim, when alone, "if he knew that my heart was wandering from him day by day. I thought I loved him fondly and truly; but, oh, this stranger is drawing my innermost heart out. What will become of me, at all? I'll go mad."

Kathleen saw that her sister was getting infatuated with the stranger, and she strove by every womanly art to break the fearful spell.

Gerald Fitzgerald saw that Eileen was forgetting his noble brother, and he felt like killing the dark stranger.

By the stranger's advice, the mystery of the murder had never been explained to Gerald, as he feared that his love for the absent one would bring matters to a crisis at once.

Eileen's father and mother saw that their darling child was growing paler and paler each day; and they knew that she was infatuated with the stranger.

Oh, how bitterly they cursed the hour that the dark stranger came down into the valley; and how anxiously they prayed for the return of Maurice.

And how did the stranger regard Eileen a Lanna?

Did he make any efforts to win the love that should belong only to the friend who was so loyal to him?

From the very moment that he first encountered the blushing girl, as she stood before him on that terrible night of storm and death, this man was attracted to her.

When he stood behind the door and saw her clinging to the innocent, hunted man, he felt that he could risk life, aye, even salvation itself for the love of such a girl.

And when consciousness came back to him, and when he was able to realize his position, the keenest pangs that arose in his breast were those he felt at the thought of parting with the charming Eileen forever.

Then, as he saw Eileen each day, his passion grew stronger and stronger, and all ideas of honor and justice faded away from his mind.

He determined, at length, to win and own Eileen, though all the world should scorn him for his baseness.

Four months have passed away since that night of storm and murder, and darkness is over that Shannon valley again.

Once more the storm king rages on the hillside, and sweeps down into that valley, and once more the old couple are seated before the fire listening to the howling blast.

The farmer and his wife did not expect any visitors this evening—they did not hear the merry voices of their daughters in the inner room—the song of "Maggie Machree," did not fall on their ears any more.

And yet visitors were hastening towards them.

Down the road, through the pelting rain, a carriage dashed at a rapid rate.

The driver on the boxes lashed his horses, and urged them on as if every moment gained was a matter of life and death.

Into the yard of the old homestead the carriage drove; and the driver springs from his seat and opens the door.

The next moment the front door of the house is flung open, and Gerald Fitzgerald, leading a lady by the hand, enters the room and stands before the old couple.

"Where's the stranger—where's Thomas McDermott?" cries the young man, in an excited tone.

"He's up in his room," was the farmer's reply.

"What's the matter, Gerald? Who is this lady?"

"Call him down at once, sir," cried Gerald.

"And tell him that his wife from America is here to see him."

The astonished farmer hastened to obey the request, while the equally astonished matron approached the lady and tendered her the accustomed civilities.

Ere many explanations could be made the agitated man returned to the sitting-room, exclaiming:

"He's not in his room at all. I don't know what to make of it. He went up half an hour ago."

"Where's Eileen?" cried Gerald, growing more and excited. "Call her. Search the house and the whole place for this man. Tell him his wife wants him. Stay! give me a lantern, and I will go outside myself. You search the house. Call the girls and let them tend to this lady."

The young man seized the lantern and dashed out into the yard, and the next moment they could hear his voice, calling on the stranger to come into the house.

Then the father raised his voice and called on his daughters to come forward.

Kathleen came at the call, and greeted Gerald and the strange lady with looks of astonishment.

"Where's Eileen?" cried the father, addressing his daughter.

"She went to her room an hour ago, complaining of a headache," was Kathleen's reply.

The mother went to the foot of the stairs, and called out:

"Eileen,—Eileen a Lanna, come down at once."

No response came to the mother's call.

Up the stairs the mother ran, into the bedroom; and those in the apartment below could hear her cry of:

"Eileen—Eileen a Lanna, where are you at all?"

And still no response came back to the endearing cry.

Neither the stranger nor Eileen could be found in the place.

At this moment Gerald rushed into the house, and a fierce glare of anger was in his eye as he exclaimed:

"I see a boat struggling out on the river, with two men and a woman in it. It must be Eileen and the stranger. Put the lamp and candles in that window there, so as to throw a glare on the waters. I'll take the other boat and go after them. I'll save Eileen yet, or I'll never look Maurice in the face again."

And out rushed the excited man.

"Oh, my God!" cried the father, as he sank powerless on his seat. "Has the dark stranger come down to our valley?"

"Eileen—Eileen a Lanna!" screamed the mother, as she ran to the door. "Machree asthore, come back to your own mother."

EILEEN ALANNA, Eileen Asthore!
Light of my soul and its queen evermore;
It seems years have lingered since last we did part,
Eileen Alanna, the pride of my heart.
Oh! darling lov'd one your dear smile I miss,
My lips seem to cling to that sweet parting kiss;
Mavourneen thy dear face I see at the door,
Eileen Alanna, Angus Asthore.

CHORUS.

Faithful I'll be to the colleen I adore,
Eileen Alanna, Angus Asthore;
Soon I'll be back to the colleen I adore,
Eileen Alanna, Eileen Asthore.

Eileen Alanna, Eileen Asthore,
The ocean's blue waters wash by the shore
Of that dear land of shamrock, where thou dost abide
Waiting the day when I'll call thee my bride.
God bless you, darling, I know you are true—
True to the boy who would die for you.
My heart is now bleeding to its innermost core,
Eileen Alanna, Angus Asthore.

CHORUS.

Faithful I'll be to the colleen I adore,
Eileen Alanna, Angus Asthore;
Soon I'll be back to the colleen I adore,
Eileen Alanna, Angus Asthore.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DARK STRANGER PLOTS AND KATHLEEN COUNTERPLOTS.

When Thomas McDermott returned to Ireland, after an absence of many years, his main idea in assuming a fictitious name was that he would be enabled to move about among his old acquaintances without being recognized.

Having left the place with his family when a mere lad, and having seen life in all its phases in the New World, it was not to be supposed that his former playmates would recognize in the tall, accomplished, bearded man the somewhat uncouth boy of other days.

He was anxious to look on the old places and the old faces, and note the changes time had made, without betraying his own name and history.

When the lad left his old home near the village of Dunmore, his parents possessed very little more money than what was necessary to defray the expenses of the voyage; and when the family landed in New York, Thomas pushed out in the world and carved his own fortune.

Possessing a fair English education, and being a keen observer of men and manners, he soon cast aside the rough coating of his early life, and moved around in society with the ease and bearing of a gentleman.

While working his way to wealth, Thomas McDermott sought the gold fields of California, and it was there that he encountered James Dunphy, the unfortunate man that was killed on the night of the meeting at the hotel.

James Dunphy was a rough, impulsive man, and, as he expressed it, he "couldn't bear to see Tom McDermott putting on so many airs."

As this rough spoken man made no effort to conceal his dislike, the two men soon came to an open rupture: and the quarrel would have terminated in the death of one or both, were it not for the earnest intervention of some mutual friends.

Thomas McDermott did not care to fight, if he could avoid it; but, as he was not a coward, he would not bear with insult at the hands of any man.

Yet there was one great reason why he did not wish to quarrel with James Dunphy.

In the city of San Francisco Thomas McDermott met with a highly-accomplished, beautiful woman, to whom he grew very much attached, and this woman was James Dunphy's sister.

This man was not aware that Thomas McDermott was attached to his sister, or it is very probable that he would have pushed the quarrel to a fatal ending in the mines.

As he afterwards expressed himself, "If I had known that Tom McDermott was after Julia, I would have killed him, or he me. For I'd sooner seen her in her grave than the wife of such a black, airish scoundrel."

Yet Julia Dunphy became the wife of Thomas McDermott, though her brother told her that she would "rue the choice ere many months were over head."

And she did rue the choice.

Her husband was a passionate, overbearing, ambitious man, unscrupulous in his dealings, and dark and vengeful in his animosities.

Julia was a high-spirited, proud, vain woman, exacting in her demands on her husband's attention and devotion, and extremely jealous if he offered the slightest homage to any one save herself.

This ill-mated pair lived together but one short year; and then they agreed to a "mutual separation."

Thomas McDermott settled on his wife a handsome yearly competence, and then he left San Francisco in order to take a tramp round the world.

His brother-in-law, James Dunphy, sailed for Australia some time before, thoroughly disgusted at his sister for the choice she had made.

When Thomas McDermott landed in Ireland, and sought his old home, he had not the

slightest idea that he would encounter his brother-in-law, as he supposed that he was still in the distant colony of Australia.

But the doomed man had grown sick and tired of wandering in strange lands: and he sought his early home with the purpose of taking a farm, marrying some neighbor's daughter, and settling down for the remainder of his life.

The first girl that attracted James Dunphy's attention was the light-hearted, winsome Eileen McMahon: and he at once set about wooing her with all the ardor of his impulsive nature.

It was not long before he discerned that Maurice Fitzgerald was his rival, and that Eileen did not receive his attentions with much favor.

This knowledge caused the headstrong, passionate man to grow furious with Maurice; and a serious altercation was the consequence.

After a hard struggle, Maurice Fitzgerald succeeded in giving his rival a sound beating.

And then, to all appearances, the men became firm and devoted friends.

There can be no doubt that James Dunphy respected the man who had proved himself able to fight for his lady-love, and, that he gave up all hopes of ever winning Eileen McMahon for his wife; while Maurice, feeling secure of Eileen's love, paid little heed to any rivalry.

Though Maurice Fitzgerald was some years younger than Thomas McDermott, they had been fast friends when they attended the same school in the village of Dunmore.

Therefore, when the prosperous man returned to his native land, he immediately sought his playmate, and made him his confidant to a certain extent.

Thomas McDermott did not say a word to Maurice about his unhappy marriage; on the contrary, he conveyed the idea that he was on the lookout for a wife, and that he "wanted to have his fling with the girls."

As Maurice has related, the meeting between Thomas McDermott and James Dunphy was purely accidental.

Maurice saw at once that there was ill-will between the men, but he had not the slightest notion that they were marriage connections.

When the three men adjourned to the private room, at Maurice's request, the latter hoped to settle all difference between them, so that Tom's secret might be preserved.

During the quarrel that preceded the murder, the name of the absent wife was never mentioned, though the knowledge of the separation must have incited James Dunphy to anger and insult.

He accused his brother-in-law of "travelling about like a pickpocket, under an assumed name, and putting on as many airs as if he had never seen Ireland before; while better men than he ever dared to be were not ashamed of the land that bore them."

McDermott replied that he "was his own master, and that he would take no dictation from a clown like him."

Then came the scuffle, the slinging of the pewter, and the plunging of the deadly knife; and then the mischief was accomplished.

When the murderer descended the stairs and hurried to the stable for his horse, his only idea was to fly to the nearest port and leave the country.

But he had not the least thought that Maurice Fitzgerald would be accused of his crime.

As he was well acquainted with the country around, he did not apprehend any trouble in finding his way.

Crossing a bridge that spanned a foaming river flowing into the Shannon, his horse stumbled and fell, breaking one of its fore legs; and then he was compelled to seek shelter in the homestead of the McMahons.

Thus it was that the dark stranger went down into that peaceful valley.

When Thomas McDermott retired to the room on that fatal night, he had not the remotest idea of injuring the man who was in his company when the murder was committed.

Even when, impelled by his fears, he de-

scended to ascertain the cause of the noise in the sitting-room, and found that Maurice was implicated in the murder, even then he only thought of availing himself for the time of Maurice's predicament.

"When I get away," he muttered as he flung himself on the bed, "I will set Maurice all right. It will only be a few days' confinement for him, at the worst, if he's taken. And then I can make that up for him when I get safe in some other country."

Then the fever and sickness came; and during his ravings Kathleen McMahon discovered that he often made mention of some one named Julia.

When this man was able to move around among the people, and when Kathleen saw that he was stealing the love of her susceptible sister, she bethought herself of writing a letter to "Julia McDermott, San Francisco, California."

The demure, watchful girl suspected that the dark stranger had left a wife behind him in America, and she was determined to save her sister by exposing his duplicity.

In the letter addressed to "Julia McDermott," Kathleen narrated the stirring incidents that accompanied the stranger's advent, and begged of the person addressed that she would, if possible, assist her in the cause of justice.

In the meantime the stranger was laying his plans to capture the fair Eileen.

He knew that he would be a fugitive and an outcast if he escaped the punishment to which the exposure of his crime would condemn him; and he was determined that the winsome Eileen should share in his flight.

During the four months that elapsed since that night of bloodshed, Thomas McDermott was in a state of constant terror and anxiety.

He expected every day to see Maurice Fitzgerald return to his home, and denounce the man who had not the courage to admit his own crime, even when his friend was suffering under the false accusation.

Several times he was on the point of fleeing from the neighborhood, with the purpose of assuming a disguise and seeking safety in Australia.

Then, as his better nature would assert itself, he would make up his mind to throw aside all fears, avow his crime, call back his friend, and take his chances of acquittal or punishment.

Yet, as day after day and week after week passed away, he still lingered at the homestead of the McMahons; and every hour he was growing more and more infatuated with the fair girl whose lover he was betraying.

Though his heart was heavy with guilt and apprehension, he could put on his fairest smiles in her presence; and though he carried on a deep game of deceit with the other members of the family, with Eileen he was apparently growing more and more confiding each day.

It may seem strange that this simple-minded, pure-hearted girl should listen to the tempter who was stealing her love from the absent one.

But it must be remembered that this man of the world was a thorough student of human nature, and thoroughly versed with all the arts and intrigues by which a woman's heart is won.

It must be remembered that Eileen looked upon the stranger as a martyr, waiting to be sacrificed at the shrine of friendship; waiting, as it were, of his own free will, to give his life to save her lover's good name, and restore him to his home and to happiness.

This man was too cautious to breathe a syllable about love for weeks after he was able to be up out of his sick bed.

At first he would only speak of his lonely, wrecked life, and of the fearful fate before him; as contrasted the happiness that awaited Maurice Fitzgerald on his return to his native land.

Then he would tell her of the bright future that dawned on him ere he had the misfortune to encounter the quarrelsome man he had killed; and how he had looked forward, through the years that he was struggling for gold, to the time when he would rest for the remainder

of his life in the enjoyment of his hard earned fortune.

But there is no need of following him, as step by step, he entwined himself in the affections of the sensitive girl; nor will we dwell on the struggles of poor Eileen, as she strove to remain faithful to the brave man in exile.

When Thomas McDermott was assured of Eileen's devotion, he gave up all thought of flying from Ireland without her; all notions of honor and manhood were banished from his mind, and he determined at all hazards, to bear the respectable girl away from home, and kindred, and live in happier days—by fair means if possible, or, if necessary, by stratagem.

With this resolution firmly fixed in his mind, his whole energies were bent toward the carrying out of his purpose.

He succeeded, by means of his plausible speeches, in gaining the forbearance, if not the friendship of Eileen's parents; but he was well aware that Kathleen regarded him with aversion and suspicion; while he had good reasons to know that Gerald Fitzgerald looked on with anything but friendly eyes.

Yet the desperate, infatuated man never faltered in his foul purpose; and, in fact, he was prepared to commit any crime rather than give up the prospect of possessing Eileen.

He even went so far as to harbor the thought of putting Maurice Fitzgerald out of the way, should he return to claim his promised bride.

It will be remembered that Thomas McDermott promised Mr. McMahon that he would take prompt measures to have the wanderer brought back to his native land.

He did write to a trusted agent in New York, instructing that agent to find Maurice Fitzgerald, if possible, and have him informed of the fact that the police were on his track, in order to drive him still further away from his native land.

The same agent, by his employer's instructions, caused a report to be spread throughout New York and San Francisco that Thomas McDermott had met with a violent death in Ireland.

The effect of this report will be apparent.

The villain hoped thereby to prevent the unfortunate fugitive from either returning to his home, or attempting to correspond with his friends there, through fear of exposing his own whereabouts to the officers of the law.

All letters from his agent in New York were addressed to the stranger under his assumed name—Thomas Dempsey.

The plotter received letter after letter, all of which were shown to the old folks, in which the agent stated that he was making every exertion to discover the whereabouts of the wanderer, but that he had not as yet met with any success.

In the meanwhile the stranger was perfecting his plans to carry Eileen away with him.

Having secured an accomplice in a fellow known in the neighborhood as Billy the Barge, he purchased a sloop in the port of Limerick; and by this means he hoped to convey Eileen to some harbor on the coast of France.

This Billy the Barge was just such a scoundrel as an unscrupulous man required in an enterprise that required discretion and daring.

He had a vile tongue when aroused to anger; and he had a fund of humor and sarcasm at command, which he did not fail to let fly on all occasions—at friend as well as foe.

Thomas McDermott knew this man years before; and he was aware that he could rely on him in carrying out any act of villainy, so long as he was well provided with money.

Billy the Barge lived on the banks of the river, about three miles below the MacMahon homestead.

In his cabin McDermott concocted the plot for the abduction of the innocent though infatuated girl.

It was proposed that Eileen should be induced to accompany the stranger on a pleasure trip, in the boat owned by this ruffian, and then to convey her on board the sloop that was lying in a cove some miles further down the river.

As McDermott was assured of the girl's de-

votion, he had no fears of forgiveness at her hands when she would discover that she was in his power.

All his arrangements were completed; and he but waited a favorable opportunity to put his design in practice, when he received intelligence from his agent that rendered him wild and desperate indeed.

On the very day that he was congratulating himself on having secured a confession of undying devotion from Eileen, he received a letter from his agent; and in that letter he was informed that his wife had sailed from America in the same steamer that brought him the intelligence.

"By heavens!" he exclaimed, as he tore the letter into a hundred pieces. "I'm ruined now, without hope of redemption. That woman hated me before. Now she'll never rest until she has avenged her brother's death, and traced it home to me. I must fly from here at once. But I cannot leave Eileen after me. I will take her along, though we should perish together."

CHAPTER V.

HOW EILEEN ANSWERED HER MOTHER'S CALL.

"THERE'S no boat could live in the blow we'll have to-night, sir," said Billy the Barge, as he stood before the stranger in his cabin, on the afternoon of the stormy night before mentioned.

"Are you afraid to risk it, Billy?" cried the man, impatiently, while his restless eyes glowed with anxiety and suppressed indignation.

"Afeard!" repeated the boatman, scornfully. "Bedad I'm no more afeared or ashamed to meet the Ould Boy than yerself; and maybe not as much. But, then, dy'e mind, there's no great inducement to me to look for warm quarters this while to come. I'm not tired of this world yet, bad as it is. An' I have no itching at all to face that fellow with the tail down in the lower regions."

"Confound your nonsense," cried the man, with rising anger. "I must and will go to sea this very night, though the waves rolled mountain high, and the thunder and lightning shook heaven and earth. I thought you told me the sloop would weather any storm that could ever arise in these parts. Come, man, screw up your courage, and put out to-night. Take us over to France, and you'll have the sloop and two hundred pounds besides."

The man's eyes glistened at this offer, and then they were turned out through the window at the threatening sky.

"Two hundred pounds is a fair penny," he said, "and I've often faced the Ould Boy for less. I'll face him again in God's name, and if we go down, why, 'twill be a consolation that I'll go in good company."

"Don't talk nonsense, Billy," cried the stranger; and don't speak of death. I hate the word. But if I had to face a hundred deaths, I'd do it willingly to get Eileen McMahon."

"There'll be the mischief's own kip [of the reel, sir," remarked Billy, "when they find she's gone off with you. And won't Gerald be tearing mad to think that Maurice's girl give him the slip?"

"Let them rave," cried the stranger. "All's fair in love. Eileen likes me better than Maurice a thousand times; and he'll never dare show his face here again."

"I don't know about that, sir," returned the boatman. "Many a one about here thinks that he never killed Jim Dunphy at all, and that 'twill all come out some day or other. But there's no use in talking about that now. I'll have to prepare for the voyage, and make me peace with God, for who knows if we'll ever see another day in this world? Well, as I said before, 'twill be in good company I'll be going down if I have to face the Ould Boy. But, begorra, I'd be after facing himself and all his pack for two hundred pounds and the tight sloop."

The two villains then consulted together for some time, and arranged their plans for bearing Eileen away on that very night.

It was quite dark when the stranger returned to the house of the McMahons, and as he approached the place he feared that his wife would be there before him.

He knew that many hours could not elapse ere she would arrive at the village of Dunmore, and, as he saw that the rain would soon come down in torrents, he prayed that the storm would render the road from the village so dangerous as to hinder her from venturing further on such a night.

But he miscalculated as regards the woman's indomitable energy, and he was not aware that Gerald Fitzgerald would become her guide.

When the stranger entered the house, Eileen's watchful eyes discovered at once that something unusual had occurred, and she was not surprised on receiving a note, which her new lover placed secretly into her hand.

Taking advantage of the first opportunity that was presented, she slipped away to her bed-room, telling her sister that she had a burning headache, and needed rest.

With trembling hands she opened her lover's note and read the contents.

The words therein written, set her almost wild with excitement, despair and doubt.

The note read as follows:

"DEAREST EILEEN:—As you must have noticed, I am almost, if not altogether distracted. Maurice is coming back right away; even before I can get a chance to hand you this note he may arrive at your house. I have made a deposition, and it will be forwarded at once, which will clear him of the charge against him. Oh, Eileen, my darling one, I cannot face death, now that I have learned to love you. I cannot bring myself to stand the ordeal of trial and exposure. I must fly at once. And, oh, Eileen, it is worse than death to me to think that I must resign you, and forever. I thought that I was a brave man, and that I could meet my fate as such; but your love has made a coward of me,

"Will you, my lost darling, grant me one interview before we part forever! This is the last request—the first and last I will ever make of you. Oh, I cannot bear to go out on the world, a hunted fugitive, without bidding you good-bye, and receiving some hope from you that you will not forget me when far away.

"If you would lighten my dark path, grant me this, my last request.

"Oh, Eileen, my darling; strive to grant me an interview, if it were only for five minutes.

"I will wait for you at the boat-house—wait for you with aching heart and tearful eyes.

"Don't fail to come, Eileen, and I will bless you ever in my darkest hours.

"Your devoted lover,

"THOMAS McDERMOTT."

At such a time, and under the circumstances, what girl could resist this appeal?

And who can portray Eileen's emotion on learning that her old lover was about to return, while the dark stranger was to be lost to her forever.

'Tis little the agitated girl heeded the pelt-ing rain, as with a shawl thrown over her shoulders, she hastened to meet her unfortunate lover.

Out by the door in the rear of the house, and down the path she ran; and the next moment she was sobbing in the arms of the man whom she had learned to love too fondly.

"Eileen, my darling," he cried, as he pressed his lips to her's, "I did not hope for this great joy. Oh, Eileen, Eileen—and must I leave you for ever?"

The trembling girl did not reply in words; but the sobs that burst from her agitated breast told the false villain how deeply she was affected.

"But the moments are precious, darling," the stranger continued, as with tearful eyes he looked down at the young girl, "and I must fly. Each moment I expect to hear the happy

Maurice spurring up to the door. Farewell, Eileen, I must leave you."

"Oh, Thomas, Thomas," muttered the devoted girl. "Is there no way of getting out of this great trouble; It will break my heart, if I must part with you forever. What will we do at all? Oh, what will we do?"

As the young girl spoke, she clung close to the villain as if to detain him by her side, and the burning tears fell faster and faster from her eyes.

"He's drawing her on finely," muttered Billy the Barge, as he sat in his boat a few yards from the lovers, "I'll have her in the boat of her own accord in less than five minutes."

Thomas McDermott felt that the moment had come when he could make a successful appeal to the affections of the weeping girl.

"Oh, Eileen, he cried, "there's no hope of happiness in this life for us, save"—

The villain paused; for at that moment the carriage dashed up the road and into the yard.

"Oh, Eileen, Eileen," he cried in a voice of anguish, "there's Maurice now, and I must away. Farewell, my darling, forever and forever."

"Oh, Thomas, Thomas," sobbed the miserable girl. "What will I do? I can't face Maurice, after what has happened. I can never be his wife now. I would sooner plunge into the dark river there, and end my misery at once."

"Fly with me, then! Fly with me, darling," whispered the man, as he lifted the unresisting girl in his arms, and bore her towards the boat. "Oh, Eileen, I will love and protect you while there is life in my body. We will be happy in another land. Come with me, darling, come."

"He's got her safe now," muttered Billy the Barge, as he grasped the oars. "He's the devil's own hand at the coaxing. Now we're off."

A few vigorous strokes, and the strong boat was out on the dark waters.

Eileen a Lanna was leaving the home of her childhood, the few friends of her youth, to face the world with the dark stranger.

Out on the troubled waters went the boat, and down came the rain in torrents; while down from the mountains swept the whistling winds.

But poor Eileen, as she lay in the stern of the boat, clasped in the arms of her false lover, did not heed the pelting rain or the driving storm.

Her only thought was that she was flying from a home that would henceforth be desolate—flying with the man she had learned to love with all the ardor of her impulsive nature.

Down the rushing river went the boat, and Thomas McDermott was already exulting in the success of his scheme.

He had no fears of the future, now that Eileen was by his side, and the howling of the storm was far more welcome to his ears, than the upbraiding of the woman who would claim him as her husband.

Out on the rushing waters went the boat, and Eileen was almost unconscious of the fatal error she had committed.

She dared not look towards the home of her childhood, and she hid her face in the mantle which her lover had flung over her to protect her from the storm.

The boat tumbled and tossed on the foamy waters, and the strong arms of Billy the Barge were exerted to their utmost strength in order to force her down the river.

The dark stranger could see that the alarm was sounded throughout the homestead; he could see the dark form of Gerald Fitzgerald moving to and fro with the lantern, and he knew that ere long their flight would be discovered.

"Pull on, pull on, Billy," he cried. "Pull for your life and mine."

"'Tis aiser said than done," replied the struggling villain, as he bent to the oars. "The tide is at a stand, and 'tis more than a giant could do to make headway."

Thomas McDermott saw the light flashing from the window of the old farmhouse, he saw the form of Gerald Fitzgerald, as the enraged

man rushed to the water's edge, and then he heard the cry of the distressed mother:

"Eileen, Eileen a Lanna, come back to your own mother."

And Eileen McMahon heard the cry as it was borne over the rushing waters.

Oh, how her heart thrilled in response to those endearing expressions.

Looking back over the water, she saw the light gleaming from the window in the old house; and in fancy she beheld her father and mother shedding bitter tears at her desertion of them.

She thought of her sister Kathleen, of Maurice, and of all the kind friends of her childhood; and now she was flying from them with the dark stranger.

"Take me back, take me back," she cried, as she attempted to break away from the man beside her. "Oh, Thomas McDermott, if you love me, take me back to my home. I cannot go with you. It would break my mother's heart."

"Nonsense, Eileen," cried her lover, as he strove to pacify the agitated girl. "You cannot go back now. You must not dream of such a thing. It is too late to think of it."

"Too late, too late," screamed the frantic girl, as she struggled violently in the embrace of the villain. "Oh, no, it is not too late. I must go back. You must take me back. Did you not hear my mother calling me?"

"Eileen," returned the man in a determined tone of voice. "I tell you it is too late now. You cannot ever again go back to your own home. Henceforth, you are mine, and mine only. Keep still, or we'll upset the boat."

Eileen looked at the man a moment, and in that glance she read his inmost soul.

"Never go back!" she exclaimed. "You lie, Thomas McDermott, I will go back."

As the desperate girl spoke, she broke from the man's embrace, exclaiming:

"Mother—Maurice—I'm coming back to you?"

And the next moment she sprang over the side of the boat into the dark river.

An exclamation of surprise broke from Billy, as he beheld this desperate act, and his first impulse was to stay the progress of the boat, and endeavor to save the girl.

Thomas McDermott uttered a cry of agony, and for a moment he stood like one paralyzed.

Then he flung himself headlong into the river, crying:

"Eileen, Eileen! I will save you yet, or perish with you."

"Murder in Irish!" yelled the boatman. "There goes two born fools, and me fine two hundred pounds along with them."

CHAPTER VI.

STRIFE ON THE RIVER, AND A SURPRISE IN THE CAVERN.

WHEN Gerald Fitzgerald sprang into the boat that was lying near the boat-house, he could see, by the glare of the light from the window, that the other craft was struggling in the river outside.

Urged on by the desire to save Eileen, and burning to avenge the insult that had been offered by the stranger, he pushed out with the stream, and pulled away in pursuit.

He was a powerful man and a skillful oarsman, and, as he bent to the work with all the energy inspired by the hope of saving the girl and punishing the man, the boat was forced through the waters at a rapid rate.

He had not proceeded more than a hundred yards from the landing, when Eileen's wild cry fell on his ears, and, on turning hastily around, he saw the desperate girl plunge into the rushing river.

Gerald uttered an exclamation of dismay, and for a moment he was almost powerless with fear that the desperate girl would meet with a watery grave.

One look more ere he bent to the oars, and he saw the form of the stranger plunging after

the girl, while he could also perceive that the oarsman remaining in the boat strove to put about with the intention of rescuing those in the water.

With the strength of a giant, Gerald now bent to the oars, and sent his boat flying through the waters, while at the same time he strove to keep his eyes fixed on the spot where the girl had plunged in.

"Eileen, Eileen," shouted Gerald, as he gazed frantically around on the troubled water, "where are you? Speak! 'Tis I—'tis Gerald—come to save you."

But no reply came back to this appeal, and the frantic man looked around in vain to catch a glimpse of the girl.

"Oh, my God," he cried, as he looked on the dark waters. "This is awful. Eileen lost, drowned. My curse, and God's curse, rest on that scoundrel forever."

At this time the boat of Billy the Barge was not more than fifty yards distant from him, and Gerald could see that it contained but a single occupant.

"I will see who the villain is that helped him, at any rate," cried the excited man. "Oh, God, Eileen, where are you at all?"

As he pulled down the river towards the other boat, the man still kept his eyes on the water, in the hope of seeing Eileen arise to the surface.

At this moment a dark object struggling in the water attracted his attention.

A few vigorous strokes of the oars, an exclamation of joy from Gerald and his hand is on the head of a human being.

Dropping one of the oars in his excitement, the strong man put forth a vigorous effort, and drew from the water the dripping form of a man.

A cry of disappointment and rage burst from Gerald as he flung the half-drowned man into the boat.

"Villain, scoundrel, thief," he cried, as he stood with clenched hands above the stranger, "where's Eileen? Where's the girl you stole from her fond home? Answer me at once, you villain of the world, or by the great God above us, back you go again into the river."

The only reply that the half-drowned man could utter was to point to the water and murmur:

"I tried to save her. I don't want to live. Fling me in, and you will be doing me a favor."

Gerald cast one more despairing glance over the waters, in the hope of catching a glimpse of the unfortunate girl.

But it was all in vain.

Oh, what wild, vengeful thoughts crowded to that man's brain, as he turned his flashing eyes on the stranger again.

"Merciful God!" he thought, "is it to be that this black scoundrel must be saved, while Eileen, the darling of her home, and of my brother's heart, is doomed to this terrible death? Curses on the base wretch; he must not live. I'll send him to his account this very minute. I'll avenge Eileen's death, if I cannot save the poor colleen."

As Thomas McDermott lay stretched in the stern of the boat, he looked up at the vengeful man and read the thoughts that were passing in his mind.

When first dragged from the waters, the stranger was in such a desperate mood at the loss of Eileen that he would have gladly welcomed death.

But the love of life soon asserted itself, even in that dark hour; and when he saw the vengeful eyes of the angry man fixed on him, and listened to the insulting denunciations that fell from his lips, the spirit of strife and resistance arose within him.

Thomas McDermott was a vile and proud man, as well as brave and vengeful.

He could not brook insult at the hands of this man, even in that hour of terror and death.

He felt that Eileen was lost to him and the world forever; and that he would have to face the anger of outraged friends, as well as answer for the crime of murder, and yet his proud spirit repelled the just denunciations now

hurled at him by this angry man—who had constituted himself her avenger.

Have a care, Gerald Fitzgerald, for there's danger in the lowering glance of that dark stranger, helpless and despairing as he seemed to be but a moment ago.

Standing in that frail boat, like a giant in your wrath, beware how you despise the desperate man before you.

It would have been better—far better—if he must die by your hands, that you had flung him back at once into the dark waters.

And Gerald was determined that he should die, then and there, and by his hands.

"Villain, reptile," rang out the angry man's voice above the noise of the wind and the angry waters. "You brought desolation and death to a happy home; you robbed my absent brother of the love of his heart, and you must die the death of a dog."

The dark stranger did not utter a word in reply to this fierce threat and bitter invective, but the scowl on his face grew darker.

Gerald's voice rang out louder and louder as he continued to denounce his victim:

"You dark fiend of hell, you drove that fine girl to destruction, after stealing her heart away from a true man; and you knowing so well all the while you were doing it. You sent her to a watery grave, without giving her a chance to say one prayer. And, by the God of vengeance, you shall have the same doom. 'Tis no murder to kill you. 'Tis only the justice of vengeance."

As Gerald concluded this terrible invective, he sprang on his intended victim.

Then, and not till then, did the stranger either by word or deed make the least demonstration.

"Fool," he cried, as he sprang to the encounter, "did you imagine you were dealing with a child? Did you suppose that I would not sell my life dearly? Life for life, let it be. Thomas McDermott is not a craven."

And life for life it was, and no mistake.

Gerald Fitzgerald was one of the strongest men in the country, and he was as active as he was powerful.

When he saw the stranger assuming a defiant attitude, and heard the bold words that fell from his lips, he burst out into a scornful laugh, as he cried:

"I'm glad ye show some spunk, ye dirty hound; for cur as you are, I like to hear you bark, before I drown you like a rat. Life for life, is it? Ha, ha, ha, Black Tom McDermott, I'll show ye how I value that worthless life of yours."

McDermott made no reply to this scornful speech, and the next moment the two men were engaged in a fierce struggle.

Much as the strong man despised his somewhat effeminate-looking antagonist at the outset, he had no sooner felt the stranger's grasp than he was aware, even in the excitement of the struggle, that he had no child's play before him.

Though McDermott's frame was cast in a slender mould, he had nerves of steel and muscles of iron.

And now, when he was struggling for life against this relentless foe, he bent all his energies, all his skill, to the encounter.

The frail boat heaved and tossed on the waters as the two men struggled and fought.

The rain still came down in torrents, and down from the mountains swept the fierce wind.

Out from the farmhouse gleamed the light, and there the sorrow-stricken parents and sister watched for the return of the lost one.

To and fro the frail boat was rocked as the desperate men, with imprecations on their lips and murder in their minds, strove for mastery.

Now the tide had turned, and the boat was moving down the river with the ebb.

At length Gerald has grasped his opponent around the waist, and, by a superhuman effort, strove to lift him up and fling him into the river.

In making this effort the enraged man lost his balance, the boat tipped over, and both

men fell into the rushing river and disappeared beneath the waves.

The stranger was the first to appear on the surface.

With the instinct of self-preservation still strong within him, he immediately struck out for the receding boat, while at the same moment he cast his eyes around, in order to ascertain if his assailant had risen to the surface.

He had not proceeded more than twenty yards when Gerald's voice assailed him as he cried out:

"Hold on, you cowardly dog, and fight the battle out to the bitter end! Hold on there, you scoundrel!"

But the stranger did not comply with the request; he preferred to seek safety in flight.

Down the river went the empty boat, and after it, striking out for dear life, went the dark stranger.

When Gerald rose to the surface, his anger was not in the least abated by the perilous position in which he found himself.

On the contrary, he had no thought but to kill the vile stranger, even though he should perish with him.

Both men were excellent swimmers, and though impeded and oppressed by their soaking garments, they struck out vigorously.

The dark stranger was the first to get the boat, which he seized with a despairing grasp.

One vigorous effort of his muscular limbs, and he is out of the water.

Grasping the only oar in the boat, he springs to the stern, just as Gerald has laid his hands on the side.

With a murderous frown on his face, the stranger raised the oar, and down it went on the hands of the struggling man in the water.

A cry of rage and pain, and Gerald has relaxed his grasp on the side of the boat.

A yell of fierce exultation broke from the stranger, as he placed his oar in the rowlock, and commenced to scull the boat with all his might.

"Ha! ha! ha!" rang out his scornful laugh, as he saw that he was leaving his opponent behind him in the rough waters. "I told you, Gerald Fitzgerald, it would be life for life. Your death be on your own head, you mad, clumsy fool."

"Coward, villain," yelled the baffled man, as he made desperate efforts to reach the receding boat. "My dying curse be on you."

And then his voice was lost in the tumult of the storm, as the stranger propelled the boat down the rapid river.

When Thomas McDermott was clear away from his late antagonist, his first impulse was to cast his eyes around in search of the boat of Billy the Barge.

But it was not in view.

During the fierce struggle, the wily boatman had plied his oars, and disappeared down the stream.

Who can describe the feelings of the desperate man as he stood alone in the stern of that frail boat.

Now, indeed, he was an outcast, and a murderer at heart as well as in deed.

He had preserved his own worthless life, but at the sacrifice of a noble, impetuous man.

The dark waters, as he supposed, had closed over Eileen forever, and he had no hope in life now.

And yet all thoughts of dying had vanished from his mind, even in that dark hour of desolation.

Already, as he forced the boat down the stream, did he think of escaping from his perilous position.

As the boat swept down by the high banks, he looked anxiously for some inlet wherein he could effect a landing.

Peering through the darkness he saw the mast of a vessel near to the shore.

With a cry of exultation he forced his boat through the waters, and in a few minutes she was pushed into a cove by the side of the vessel.

"My own little craft, by all that's fortunate," cried the desperate man. "Now, indeed, has fortune befriended me."

The stranger was about to spring on board of his vessel, when a light gleaming out from the corner at the end of the cove attracted his attention.

"I must see what's going on there," he muttered, as he pushed his boat towards the cavern. "This may be a rendezvous of smugglers, and they're exactly the fellows I want to meet just now."

Pushing the boat up on the sandy beach, the stranger sprang on the strand, and advanced cautiously to the entrance of the cavern from which the glare of light came forth.

Standing for a moment at the mouth of the cavern, he peered in, and saw two figures seated on large stones before a blazing fire.

Thomas McDermott could not see the faces of the occupants of the cavern, as their backs were turned towards him; but he noted that one of them was a stalwart man, clad in the garb of a peasant, while the other appeared to be an uncouth-looking lad, clad in tattered garments.

The stranger hesitated a moment before he addressed the occupants of the cavern.

He was in need, however, of assistance, as well as shelter and warmth, and here was a chance that was not to be despised.

"Hallo, comrades in misfortune," he cried. "Will you give a?"

The words were scarcely uttered when the man sprang to his feet with a cry of dismay, turned around to face the intruder, and cried:

"My God, Tom McDermott, have you come back to haunt me? I never injured you."

The stranger sprang back with a cry of terror and surprise.

And well he might, for Maurice Fitzgerald, Eileen's late lover, stood before him.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRUE AND THE FALSE FACE TO FACE.

As Maurice Fitzgerald and Thomas McDermott stared at each other in the corner, it would be impossible to describe the consternation and dismay depicted on each countenance.

The dark stranger was thunderstruck at meeting the man he had injured so deeply; while it was evident that Maurice regarded his former friend as one having risen from the grave.

The stranger strove to speak some words of inquiry, but his tongue refused to give utterance.

He was thoroughly dumbfounded.

Five minutes before he was congratulating himself on having escaped death at the hands of Gerald Fitzgerald, and was planning to escape from the country by means of the craft in the cove outside; while now, standing before him was the brother of the man he had consigned to the waters—the lover of the fair girl he had lured on to death.

All the infamy that he had been guilty of for the last four months flashed on his mind, as clearly as the drowning person remembers the principal events of his life; and, as he stared at the injured man before him, his first impulse was to rush from the cavern and plunge into the rushing waters.

Thomas McDermott had braved great dangers during the past hour, and his mental and bodily powers were strained to their utmost strength; and now he was unable to bear the sudden shock of meeting his old friend in such a strange place and at such an unpropitious hour.

Impelled by an indescribable terror, he strove to retreat from the cavern, but his limbs were as powerless as his tongue; and, uttering a stifled cry, he clapped his hand to his head, and sank senseless to the ground.

When Maurice Fitzgerald heard the voice of the stranger in that silent cavern, he hailed it as coming from one who was not of this world.

He was laboring under the firm belief that Thomas McDermott was dead—that he had perished on the night when he first sought shelter in the valley.

As Maurice had no cause to fear either the

living or the dead, his surprise was but momentary; and, as he gazed at the stranger, and realized that it was flesh and blood that stood before him, his heart bounded with joy.

As the criminal attempted to retreat from the cavern, Maurice sprang towards him, exclaiming:

"Heavens be thanked, Tom McDermott, that you are not dead. What ails you, man?"

And the next moment he was bending over the prostrate form of the stranger, and clasping his hand within his own, in order to assure himself that he was not dealing with a ghost.

"Darby, Darby," cried Maurice, as he turned to the wild-looking being who stood near the fire, "hurry, and bring me the bottle there. Sure 'tis Tom McDermott, that I thought dead these four long months. Hurry, man, till I bring him to. He's gone off in a swoon. How in the world did he come here at all at this time? And his clothes are all soaking wet."

The being addressed as Darby sprang around the cavern when thus appealed to, muttering:

"Sure that's the dark stranger, Maurice. That's the one yer war askin' about. He's not good at all, Maurice. Don't give him a drop of the whisky."

"Nonsense, Darby," returned Maurice, "You don't know what you're talking about. Do as I bid you, and give me the bottle at once. Don't you see he's dying? Look how pale he is! Heavens and earth, man, I wouldn't have him die now for all the world. His life is as precious to me as my own, for now I can face the world, and prove my innocence at once. Give me the bottle, or I'll break every bone in your body."

Thus threatened, the strange looking lad sprang to the corner of the cavern, and produced a small bottle, which he handed to Maurice with evident reluctance, as he muttered:

"Maurice, Maurice, ye'll be sorry for bringing that black villain to life—so ye will. Mark me words, but he'll pay ye back with treachery. I'd sooner throw it into the river than give him a drop of it."

But Maurice paid no attention to the muttered forebodings of the lad, as his only anxiety at that moment was to restore the stranger to consciousness.

For the past four months he had been an outcast and a fugitive; and now bright visions of peace and happiness dawned upon him, should he succeed in restoring this man to life and reason.

Raising McDermott's head, Maurice poured some of the liquor from the bottle down his throat.

Then he opened his vest and placed his hand near the region of the heart, in order to ascertain if it still beat.

A cry of joy burst from the anxious man, as he felt that the life-blood still flowed freely through the stranger's veins, and that in all probability he would be soon restored to consciousness.

"What a fool I was," muttered Maurice, as he thought of his months spent in anguish, "What a fool I was all this time, to be running and hiding for another's crime. Thinking him dead all the while, and I afraid to show my face for fear of suffering for the killing of James Dunphy. I'm a born fool, that's what I am."

"Faith, but you're right there," remarked his uncouth companion. "And be the same token, ye're now doing the foolish thing ye ever did. I'd let him die, and be hanged to him—so I would."

"Hush, Darby," interrupted Maurice. "He is coming to. Oh, thanks be to the Lord for it. There's a weight off my heart now, and no mistake."

Yes, the stranger was "coming to."

He opened his eyes, stared wildly around the corner; and then his gaze encountered that of the man who was bending over him.

"You're feeling better now, Tom," said Maurice, as his eyes sparkled with joy. "Take another pull of the bottle, and you'll be yourself again, man. What happened to you at all—and what drove you to this place?"

As the honest-minded man spoke he placed the bottle to the lips of the stranger.

Another swallow or two of the generous liquor, and Thomas McDermott had so far recovered from his temporary weakness as to be able to sit on the stone before the fire; while Maurice waited on him as kindly as a mother would tend to her sick child.

Up to this moment the stranger had not opened his lips in answer to the questions of the man before him.

Although his countenance wore a bewildered expression, his mind was now perfectly clear and active; and he was meditating on the part he would play in dealing with the unsuspecting and confiding man whom he had so deeply injured.

As he looked at Maurice, and saw the happy expression on his open, manly face, he felt that no suspicion of foul play had yet crossed his mind.

"I can fool him yet," thought the stranger. "He does not suspect me, in the least, of any treachery. I must play a bold part, and fight the matter out to the bitter end. There is no other hope for me."

Thomas McDermott looked at the scowling face of the half-witted lad who was standing by the fire, and he felt that this creature was his enemy, that he could not hope to conciliate him by any plausible explanation or fair speeches.

"I took you for a ghost, Tom," continued Maurice, as he looked earnestly at the man before him. "And, faith, 'tis small blame to me, for I thought you were dead these four months past, and you looked like a dead man when you came in here a while ago."

"I wish I were," thought the stranger, as he reflected on the terrible position in which his evil passions had placed him. "T'would be a great release."

"Why don't you speak to me, Tom?" inquired Maurice, as he took the stranger's hand within his own. "Sure you're glad to see me back, aint you? And how are all the folks in the old house above? And where did you keep yourself all this time, while I was rambling about the world? Why, man, I saw an account of your death in the American papers, and it was the sorry news to me, though I always thought you were gone after that unfortunate night. Tell me all about it, man. Tell me all about what's happened here since I left—for the mischief a good word did I hear since I ran away like a fool."

"I—I," muttered the villain, in a feeble voice. "I can hardly speak, Maurice, I'm so weak. Tell me what happened to yourself, and then I will be strong enough to answer your questions. Oh, my head is bursting."

"The devil burst your heart," muttered Darby, as he glanced at the stranger with a sullen face.

"'Tis easy to tell what happened to me," was Maurice's reply, "and I will give it to you in a short time; though on me soul, I wouldn't go through what I suffered again if I got the finest farm in Ireland."

"When you struck down James Dunphy on that unfortunate night, and left me alone with him, it never occurred to me that I'd be accused of the deed; but I was, and before you had fairly made off with the horse."

"I was so stunned that I couldn't think of doing anything but making off myself as fast as I could; and when I found your horse lying dead by the bridge, I made sure that you was killed yourself, and that I would have to stand accused of killing James, without any witness in the world to prove me innocent of the crime. 'Twas an awful scrape to be in, wasn't it?"

The stranger's only reply was a nod of the head.

He was paying very little attention to this portion of Maurice's story, as he had heard it before; and now his busy brain was at work planning his own future course of action.

"When I made up my mind," continued Maurice, "that you were dead, I thought it was the best of my play to clear out of the country at once, as I knew the police would soon be on my track—and so they were."

"My brother Gerald was with me when we found the horse, and I ran down to bid Eileen good-bye before leaving the country, and to tell them all that I was innocent of the crime that was laid to me."

"While I was parting with Eileen, I heard my brother's signal, warning me that the police were coming, and then I shot away down by the banks of the river."

"I had nothing to carry with me but a bundle of clothes that I put up when I stopped at the house, and it was an easy matter for me to give the police the slip."

"I won't make a long story of my travels, for I'm dying to show myself, now that I know you're alive to prove my innocence. I'm wild with joy to meet Eileen and Gerald, and all the folks again."

The stranger could not repress an exclamation, as he listened to the sanguine words of the wanderer.

"What ails you, Tom?" Maurice inquired.

"Oh, nothing," was the reply. "My head aches so, and I was thinking of the scrape I got you into, Maurice; but it will come out all right now; go on with your story."

"Well," continued Maurice, "I made my way through the country as well as I could till morning, picking up a bite here and there during the next day, and resting in an out-house till night came again."

"But I won't bother you with an account of my travels, only to tell you that I made my way to Cork, and managed to get passage on board a steamer without being detected by the police, though they were on the lookout for me."

"As I had some money in my pocket I got along very well till I reached New York, though my heart was sore all through the voyage, and I was afraid they'd catch me when the vessel got in."

"However, I had no trouble at all in getting safe on shore, and then I put out of the city at once and made my way out to the mines in Pennsylvania, as I thought I'd be safer there than anywhere else."

"As my money was all spent, I went to work at once; and all the time I was dying to hear a word from home; but I was afraid to write to anyone here, for fear it would lead to the police finding me."

"I wasn't long at the mines when I read in a New York paper a report of your death; and also an account of the murder of James Dunphy, and how the police were in New York looking after myself."

"In the very same paper I read a notice, calling on me not to be afraid to show myself in my old home, as everything would be cleared up, and the real murderer punished. This notice was signed by a lady who called herself Julia McDermott, and she says she's your wife, Tom."

"The fool," muttered the stranger, as his eyes flashed with anger. "I'll make her suffer for this. Go on, Maurice."

"Well," continued the wanderer, "I didn't know what to make of this at all, only that it was a trap fixed to get hold of me by the police."

"But still it kept preying on my mind by night and day, till at last I determined to go to New York, and see for myself what kind of a person this was that offered to clear me of the charge."

"As I had no friend in the world to confide in, I was very cautious in all I undertook, and I went quietly to the big city, and made my way to the house where the lady said in the paper I could find her."

"I managed to fix myself up with an outlandish wig and false beard, so that my own colleen even wouldn't know me if she came across me; and then I made for the house where the lady was stopping."

"When I got there, I was told that she went on board of a steamer that very day, and that the steamer was to sail for Cork on the morrow."

"'Twas then I made up my mind that, come what would, I'd make back here on the same

vessel, and see how matters were going on at home.

"Oh, Tom, I was wild to see Eileen and all the folks here again, and I made up my mind to face the worst, sooner than be hiding away like one guilty.

"I took passage next morning on the same vessel with the lady that calls herself your wife, though I did not make myself known to her at all, as I couldn't make out what she was up to in trying to find me out.

"During the voyage I watched her as well as I could, for she was in the cabin and I in the steerage; and between you and me, Tom, if she is your wife, she's a little mad, for a queer-acting person I never met in my born days."

The stranger's eyes sparkled at this announcement, and a fiendish smile passed over his face, as he cried:

"She's no wife of mine, Maurice. Why, that's a crazy woman that's been troubling me this long time. I thought she was in the lunatic asylum in California; but I suppose she must have escaped. Go on, man. Tell me what happened after you met the woman. Did you ever speak to her?"

"No, indeed," replied Maurice. "I was afraid to speak to her, for I did not know what to make of her at all. Neither did the people on board the vessel, for they all put her down as one that wasn't sound in her mind."

"She's as mad as a March hare," cried the stranger. "Why, Maurice, that woman ought to be confined at once, or she'll do some great mischief. Go on, man."

"Well," continued Maurice, "when the vessel reached Queenstown, I noticed that she got off about the same time I did myself; and I haven't laid my eyes on her since, for I made my way down here as quietly and as fast as I could, without venturing to speak a word to her at all.

"'Twas late this day when I struck the village above, and, as I was afraid to go near any one till I learned how things were going on, I was making for this place to hide till morning, when I came across Darby here; and, as I knew I could trust him, I brought him with me; and 'tis surprised enough I was at what he told me."

"What did he tell you, Maurice?" inquired the stranger, as he cast a fierce glance at the half-witted lad.

"I told him," cried the lad, as he looked the stranger full in the face, while an angry frown overspread his own, "I told him that a dark stranger was trying to steal away the girl he left behind him; and that if he didn't hurry to the fore, there'd be no colleen to welcome him back. I told him that; an' I now tell ye to yer face, that 'tis ye're the black scoundrel yer-self that was doing it."

Thomas McDermott looked at the daring lad for a moment with a smiling face, and then he turned to Maurice, exclaiming:

"Maurice, Maurice, don't mind what that fool says. He doesn't know what he's talking about. Why, man, I've been waiting here all this time for you to come back, so that I could give myself up."

"You have in me eye," cried Darby, with a sneer.

"Hold your tongue, Darby," said Maurice, "and let the gentleman tell his story."

And the dark stranger did tell his story, in the most plausible manner, while his earnest words carried conviction to the mind of his confiding hearer.

He told of his adventures on the night of the affray at the hotel, of his sickness, and his waiting to hear from Maurice, in order to clear him of the charge against him.

All the arguments that he had used with Mr. McMahon and his family were now brought to bear on Maurice, and the confiding man believed every word that his false friend uttered.

"Maurice, Maurice," he cried, in conclusion, "I'm glad you're safe back now, though I'll have to bear the punishment for killing that fool. And, to tell you the truth, Maurice, I was making preparations to escape when you did come back."

"I don't blame you, Tom," returned the con-

fiding man. "'Twas all his own fault, though 'tis a bad thing to be too handy with the weapon in a quarrel. I'd sooner trust to my hands—and I did, too, when I had a quarrel with him. But, come, man, you're strong enough now, and your clothes are nearly dry. Take another swig of the bottle, and we'll be making up to see the folks. I'm dying to meet Eileen. Ha! ha! ha! Tom, 'tis a good joke. Darby here thinking you were making up to her all the time, when you were only waiting for me to come back to clear me. Oh, won't they be all surprised to see me."

"I'm with you, Maurice," replied the stranger, as he sprang to his feet. "And while we're going along I will tell you how I came here to-night in this plight; and also explain to you how I intend to get away as soon as I've cleared you."

"I'll give you a hand, with all my heart," returned the wanderer, as he grasped the hand of his false friend once more.

Thomas McDermott was in a desperate position, and he realized it fully.

He realized also that he must adopt desperate measures, if he would save his life.

He thought of his enraged wife at the farmhouse, and of Eileen's untimely death.

He thought of Maurice's brave brother, whom he had cast back into the waters, and he did not regret the deed, as he felt that it was one more enemy out of the way.

"There's nothing to be done now," was his mental exclamation, "but to fight the matter out with a bold face. And, when it comes to the worst, I can but die once."

Then out into the darkness went the stranger, Maurice, and the half-witted lad, who was known in the neighborhood as Darby the Rambler.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DARK STRANGER BRAVING THE STORM.

It is impossible to describe the anguish of Eileen's father and mother when they discovered that their daughter had been taken away from them by the dark stranger.

The first surprise and consternation over, the stern old man seized his stick and hat, and ran down to the banks of the river.

Loud and frantic were the cries he sent out over the dark waters, as he called on the stranger to bring back his daughter.

The mother sat by the fire, moaning and sobbing as if her heart would break, and now and then muttering:

"Eileen—Eileen a Lanna, come back to your mother."

Kathleen stood by her mother's side for some time, and her tearless face was the picture of misery.

The strange lady stood at the door, gazing out over the dark river, and muttering threats against the husband who had killed her brother.

Kathleen could hear her father's voice, as he called on the stranger to bring back his daughter, and she prayed that Gerald's voice would answer back, for she knew that her brave lover would strive manfully—that he would perish in the river, or bring back the lost girl.

"Father will catch his death of cold," muttered the girl, as she flung a shawl over her head, and dashed out of the door.

Down at the water's edge she found her father, his eyes fixed on the river, as he endeavored in vain to catch a glimpse of the fugitive and Gerald.

"Father, father," Kathleen cried; "Come into the house, or you'll catch your death of cold. Gerald will bring Eileen back before long. Set your mind at rest. There's some mistake. Eileen would never leave us in that way."

The helpless man did not reply; but, after casting another anxious look down the river, he suffered his daughter to lead him back to the house.

Without uttering a word, the old man took

his seat by the fire, covered his face with his hands, and wept like a woman.

Kathleen approached the stranger, and requested her to take a seat by the fire.

"Oh, don't mind me at all," was the woman's reply. "I am not in the least weary or chilled. My blood is on fire, to think of the villainy of that false wretch, that murderer. Is there no way of pursuing him at once? Oh, I'm afraid he'll escape me, after all."

Kathleen assured the stranger that further pursuit would be useless on that wild night, that if Gerald did not succeed in capturing him, no one else could.

After considerable entreaty, the lady was prevailed upon to take a seat, and await the return of Gerald.

An hour passed away, and the anxious inmates of that homestead listened for the sound of approaching footsteps.

Few and sad were the words spoken during that weary hour, and Kathleen, in all her anguish of heart, had to exert herself in making some appearance of entertaining their unexpected guest.

Kathleen noticed that the woman's manner was abrupt and even rude at times, while her eyes flashed with an unnatural fire.

Though the young girl was terribly excited over the flight of her beautiful sister, she could not help thinking that the woman before her displayed symptoms of mental agitation bordering on insanity.

Still another hour passed away, and the watchers waited and prayed for the safe return of the absent one; and still the strange visitor became more and more excited.

Despite all Kathleen's entreaties, she would run to the door every ten minutes, and, gazing forth on the river, exclaim:

"He'll come back here again to-night. I know he will. And then I will have revenge on him for the murder of James, and his inhuman treatment of me."

Oh, how anxiously Kathleen watched for the return of her lover, as she strove at one moment to soothe the anguish of her parents, and then attempted to calm the excited woman, whose manner and actions were growing more and more demonstrative.

Another hour passed away, and the weary, anxious girl was almost exhausted by her exertions and fears, when footsteps were heard on the path outside.

"Thank God," she muttered, as she sprang to the door; "here comes Gerald at last. Oh, I pray to heaven that he has brought Eileen back with him."

The other inmates of the room sprang to their feet on hearing the footsteps outside, and it was piteous to see the looks of hope and fear expressed on the countenance of the old man and his wife.

"He's come at last," cried the strange woman, as with flashing eyes she watched for the approaching visitors.

Kathleen's hand was on the knob, and scarce ere the sound of the summons had fallen on their ears, the door was opened, and Maurice Fitzgerald and the dark stranger entered the room.

Then such a tumult arose—such a scene of confusion and uproar as was never witnessed in that quiet homestead before.

The old farmer sprang towards the visitors, exclaiming, as he grasped Maurice by the hand:

"Welcome home, Maurice. Oh, thanks be to God, you're with us once more."

Then, turning to the stranger, he cried:

"Where's my daughter—where's Eileen, you villain? Where's my darling child?"

The mother flung herself on the young man, as she sobbed and laughed hysterically, while she muttered:

"Maurice, Maurice, you're welcome—ten thousand times welcome. I'll not ask you, now, where my girl is, for I know she's safe, that you're here. But where is my a lanna? Oh, tell me she's safe."

"Villain, wretch, murderer! exclaimed the strange woman, as she faced her husband, "I've caught you at last. Have you the au-

dacity to look me in the face after your vile murderous conduct?"

"Oh, Maurice, Maurice," sobbed Kathleen, as she pressed the hand of the bewildered man, "why didn't you come back before? Did you see anything of Eileen?"

"For heaven's sake!" exclaimed the astonished man, as he looked from one to the other of the excited group, "tell me what all this means? Where's Eileen? What has happened to her that she is not here to meet me? Do you want to drive me mad entirely, on the very night I come back to you? What does it all mean?"

"Then you don't know where Eileen is?" cried the excited father, as he turned to the stranger with a fierce expression on his stern face. "Don't you know, Maurice Fitzgerald, that this villain here stole away your promised wife this very night? Don't you know that your brother Gerald is now out on the Shannon looking for her? Where's my child, you villain? Where's the girl you stole away from her home?"

With a yell of rage and indignation, Maurice Fitzgerald faced the accused man.

"Tell me," he cried, as he raised his clenched hand to strike, "tell me, Tom McDermott, if this is true? Answer me, for your life, ere I crush you like a serpent."

"Hold! Hold! Maurice! For the love of God, hold!" cried the stranger, as he retreated a step, and held up his hands in a supplicating manner. "There's some great mistake here. Indeed there is. As God is my judge, I know no more about Eileen than you do. I didn't lay my eyes on her since I left the house here early this evening. Don't strike me, Maurice, or you'll be sorry for it. Do you think I'd be mad, to face this house again, if I were guilty of such a base act. Oh, there is some cruel mistake here. I don't understand it at all; but may god strike me dead if I am guilty of this charge."

Maurice Fitzgerald gazed in amazement at the stranger as he spoke these earnest words.

Then he looked at the folks around him? and he saw that they were as much bewildered as himself.

And it was no wonder, for the stranger's words and manner, together with the earnest and indignant expression on his countenance, was sufficient to baffle the keenest penetration.

That bold, desperate villain was playing a deep, dangerous game; but he was playing it to perfection.

Even the bold, honest countenance of Maurice Fitzgerald was not more expressive of indignation and surprise than was that counterfeit face.

"Is it possible," cried the old farmer, as he glanced at the man before him, "is it possible that you tell me to my face that you know nothing of Eileen, when Gerald saw you out on the river with her in the boat this evening?"

"Gerald saw me on the river with her tonight!" exclaimed the man. "Why, he must be out of his head. Where is he? What could induce him to say such a thing! I verily believe that this foolish woman has set you all distracted. She has almost made a maniac of me."

"Villain, liar," cried the woman, as she advanced to where her husband was standing. "'Tis you that has driven me mad with your infamy and crime. But I'll be revenged on you, if I had to kill you with my own hands, you vile wretch, you base murderer."

A smile of contempt passed over the stranger's face as he turned away from his wife, and addressed Maurice.

"Maurice, my old friend," he cried, "you know how this mad woman has been persecuting me, you know that to-morrow I will have to face the officers of the law, and answer for the killing of that man. And you know that it was not my fault that he provoked me to do it. Don't for heaven's sake, believe for a moment that I'd be guilty of ingratitude to you, or that I'd ever think of repaying the kindness of your friends here by such treachery as I am accused

of. I tell you again, there's some mistake—some cruel mistake—in all this matter; and that it will be all cleared up in the morning. Eileen will be found, and you will be declared innocent before the world."

"I don't know what to say at all," returned Maurice, with a perplexed look. "'Tis more than I can comprehend altogether; I can't believe that you, Tom McDermott, above all men in the world, would be guilty of such baseness. There must be some mistake, Mr. McMahon—as he says. Oh, my heart is so sore, that I don't know what to say or do. What could have happened to Eileen at all?"

Kathleen had watched the stranger with a suspicious eye, while he was talking with so much apparent earnestness; and, with all her keen powers of preception in full play, she, too, was deceived by his assumed sincerity.

In fact, the stranger played his part so well that he succeeded in deceiving all save his deserted wife.

She knew the villain too well; and she was not to be cajoled or deceived by his false tongue.

"Fools! fools!" she exclaimed, as she saw the effect his words had produced on those present. "The lying wretch is beguiling you all with that oily tongue of his, but he can't fool me in that way, for I know him to well. I suppose you'll tell us next that you did not murder my brother, James Dunphy, and that I am not your wife?"

"Mad woman," replied the man, "what misfortune drove you here after me? I did kill that crazy brother of yours, for he provoked me to it. As to you, you crazy fool, you're no wife of mine, and if you trouble me any more I'll hand you over to the police. I have trouble enough on my hands now, without being bothered with your nonsense."

"No wife of yours!" cried the woman, as she rushed at the man. "Thomas McDermott, do you dare deny me—deny that I am your wedded wife?"

"Of course I do," was the reply. "Do you suppose that I am as mad as yourself?"

The woman uttered a cry of rage, and, before any one could interfere she drew a pistol from her pocket and fired at her treacherous husband.

The ball struck the man on the arm, and he drew back, while a cry of pain fell from his lips.

The infuriated woman was about to raise the weapon again, when Maurice sprang forward and seized her arm.

"Let me go, let me go," cried the maddened creature. "I've sworn to kill him, and I'll do it this very minute. Stand aside, man, or I'll turn the weapon on you. No one will dare stand between me and that wretch."

Maurice strove to overpower the desperate woman and take the pistol from her grasp, but he found that the infuriated being could not be held back without resorting to extreme measures.

She struggled and fought with all the rage and determination of one wild with fury, and the spectators held their breath in suspense, expecting every moment to see her break away from Maurice and kill the man who had refused to acknowledge her as his wife.

"Run, run, Tom," cried Maurice, as he felt he could not hold the crazy woman much longer. "Run, man, or she'll murder you in spite of me."

The stranger did not wait for a further bidding, but sprang at once for the door, and disappeared in the darkness.

When the woman saw that her false husband had escaped, she uttered a cry of rage, dropped the pistol on the floor, and fell senseless in the arms of the man who had balked her in that determined attempt at taking her husband's life.

Kathleen and her parents, forgetting their own sorrow in that moment of excitement, approached the insensible woman, and endeavored to restore her to consciousness.

"A strange night's work, indeed," muttered the old farmer, as he gazed on the pale face of the woman. "Maurice, Maurice, 'tis a queer welcome you get intirely."

"Faith, but you may well say that, sir," was the young man's reply. "I don't know whether I'm standing on me head or me heels this very moment, with all I've seen and heard. But, with the blessing of God, 'twill all come right at the dawning of the day, as poor Eileen said the last night I was in this very room. 'Tis many a time I thought of them same words when I was far away from here."

"May God send it so," said the old man fervently, as he sank into his seat by the fire.

While this exciting scene was going on in the sitting-room, a face was peeping in at the window, and its owner was watching with eager eyes all that transpired.

When the stranger ran out of the house and disappeared in the darkness, Darby the Rambler withdrew from the window, muttering to himself:

"'Twas a pity she didn't kill the scoundrel. I'll keep me eye on him, at all events. If he's up to any more diviltry, hang me if I don't baulk him."

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT THE STRANGER SAW IN THE CABIN AND ON THE SLOOP.

WHEN Thomas McDermott fled from his infuriated wife, he did not pause till he reached the path that led along the banks of the river.

He was weary and sick at heart after enduring so much of mental and bodily exertion—his head ached, his heart throbbed wildly, and his limbs were almost numb.

Oh, how he longed for rest—rest for the mind as well as the body; and, as he thought of the terrible position in which he was placed, he was tempted to plunge into the rushing river, and end his misery forever.

Flinging himself on a rustic seat, he strove to collect his thoughts, and, at the same time, form some plan of action for the future.

"I can't go back to that house again," he muttered. "And it is just as well. Curse that she-devil. I did not think she would be so violent. She's getting mad sure. I played for time—faced the storm, that I may get a chance to escape from Maurice. And now I am clear of the house in a way that I did not expect. I hoped to get a few hour's rest, and escape at daylight. But there is no rest for me, until I get out of the country. I must drag myself down to Billy's cabin, get him to go down to the cove with me, and then we will push out to sea in the sloop."

After the stranger had rested for a short time, he arose from the seat and proceeded down the path.

As he walked along by the river side, he could not keep his eyes away from the water.

"I wonder," he muttered, "if Eileen's body will be found? This has been a terrible night. Oh, I would give the world if that poor girl were alive again. And Gerald, too. Won't Maurice be wild when he discovers that he has lost his girl and his brother? Why did I ever visit this place? I brought a curse with me. I am cursed myself, now and forever."

Absorbed in gloomy thought, the man proceeded on his way.

When he reached the cabin of Billy the Barge, he saw that the light was burning inside.

"He's up yet," muttered the stranger. "Confound the fellow. Why did he make off so fast to-night?"

Approaching the cabin with cautious steps, the stranger peered in at the window.

"All right," he muttered "Billy is alone."

A gentle knock on the door startled Billy from his reverie before the fire.

"Who in the mischief can this be?" muttered the boatman. "Aha! I'll bet 'tis the stranger himself."

The next moment the bolts were withdrawn, and the weary man entered the cabin.

The stranger flung himself on a seat before the fire, and was about to speak to Billy, when the latter held up his hand to command silence.

and at the same time pointed to an inner apartment.

"Hush!" said the boatman, in a low voice. "Don't speak above your breath, on your life."

"Whose there?" inquired the stranger.

"Look," was the reply.

As the boatman spoke he took the candle from the table, and opened the door of the room.

The stranger followed him without uttering a word.

Billy held the candle so that its rays fell on the form of a man who was sleeping soundly on a cot in the room.

The stranger started back as he recognized the face of the sleeper, and muttered:

"Gerald Fitzgerald!" Thank goodness, there's one crime less on my soul."

Billy closed the door on the sleeper; and, approaching the stranger, whispered into his ear:

"You can't stay here, sir, even for an hour. Don't say a word now, for I know all about it. He came here awhile ago, half-drowned, and not able to stir further. He don't suspect me of having a hand in the business, and he mustn't. Come outside at once."

"But I'm completely used up, Billy," remonstrated the stranger; "and I can't move another step, if all the fiends in the lower regions were after me."

"You can't stay here," said the boatman, in a low, determined voice. "Come, come, and go with me. I won't take ye far. If he wakes up, and find ye here, he'd murder the pair of us. Come along, man."

Out into the darkness once more, the weary man was compelled to turn, with Billy the Barge by his side.

"Where are you going, Billy?" he inquired, as he saw that his companion was leading him along by the river's side.

"To the sloop, of course," was the reply. "Where else would it be safe for ye to turn now. Ha! ha! sir, but I'll earn that two hundred pounds yet, and without much fear of facing the Ould Boy, for the blow is most over, an' we'll have a smooth water under us by the dawn of the morning."

"I'll make it three hundred, Billy," returned the stranger, "if you land me safe in France."

"The money is as good as earned, sir," cried the man in an exultant tone, "and not forgetting the sloop either."

"She's yours, Billy. But did you see anything of the girl after she went over. Oh, Billy, I'd give you a thousand pounds if you had saved her. Is there any hope—any chance—that she escaped from the river?"

"Miracles have been worked afore, sir, and they will again," replied the rogue, with a chuckle. "A thousand pounds! Oh, murder in Irish, but that's a fine penny. Why, if I had that much, I could be a gentleman all the rest of me life. Come on, sir. Here we are near the cove, and when we get on the sloop, ye can take a good rest."

The boat in which the stranger had escaped to the cove still lay on the beach; and in a few minutes the men were standing on the deck of the sloop.

"There's a light in the cabin, Billy," said the stranger. "Were you on board to-night?"

"Yis, sir, I was," replied Billy. "Come down and see how nice I fixed things for you. I knew you'd be here again, when I saw the boat here. You just come down at once."

The stranger followed the boatman into the cabin; but he had not taken a step beyond the door, when he started back, exclaiming:

"Heavens and earth, Billy, who's that lying there. Is it possible that is Eileen? Oh, for heaven's sake, speak man! Is she alive? How did she come here? This is, indeed, a surprise, and a joyous one."

"Hush, sir," said Billy, in a warning voice. "She's asleep, the poor thing, and don't wake her. What do you think of my miracle now, sir?"

"Oh, Billy, you're worth your weight in gold," was the reply as the stranger advanced to the sofa where the sleeping girl was reclining.

"My heart was heavy an hour ago; and now I don't care a fig for all the danger and doubt that besets me. Eileen, Eileen—you'll be mine, in spite of the world. Oh, but this is a joy indeed."

"Fair, and aisy, sir," said Billy, as he drew the man away from the girl's side. "The poor creature is near dead; and you must let her sleep till morning."

"But how did you save her, Billy?" inquired the stranger, as he continued to gaze on the beautiful face of the sleeper.

"I'll tell ye all about her in the morning, you must lie down there on the bed, and sleep till daylight. Then we'll be off for France. Trust to me, sir, and I'll warrant you I'll airm the money ye promised."

"I'm not in the least weary now, Billy," returned the stranger. "I could watch her here all night, and forget all the dangers I've encountered. Oh, Billy, Billy, why not put out to sea now, this very minute? Something may happen before morning to hinder us escaping. Don't you know that Maurice Fitzgerald has returned. He's up at the house now, and he won't rest an hour till he has searched high and low for Eileen here, and for his brother. Let's be off at once, man. Everything is ready, and I have plenty of money about me."

The boatman reflected for some time before replying to this proposition; and then he muttered:

"Maurice back again? Sure enough, he'll be on your track afore long. And after what's happened to-night, I can't show me face here, if the girl is to the fore to tell the hand I took in the business. Faith, 'tis the best of me play to up sail and off, and the night isn't so bad now, either."

Then raising his voice a little, he addressed the stranger:

"See here, sir. I want to tell you that I'm a ruined man if 'tis found out what I'm doing to-night. Ye must stand to me, and no mistake, if ye want me to stand to ye. Count me out three hundred pounds at once, and I'm yer man. Will start this very minit."

The stranger drew a water-proof wallet from his pocket, and handed Billy the money required.

He then went to a closet in the cabin, opened it, and drew forth a revolver.

"Now, Billy," he said, as he placed the pistol in his side pocket, "I want you to thoroughly understand that I'll stand no humbugging. I'm a desperate man, and I'm determined to take that girl with me. Be faithful to me, and I'll reward you well. Betray me, or attempt to do it, and I'll blow your brains out."

"Don't be talking nonsense, sir," replied the villain. "Sure I'm as almost as deep in the mud as you're in the mire. Come on deck, till we raise the anchor and push her out in the stream."

"Villains! rascals!" shouted a rough voice at the door of the cabin. Ye musn't take that girl away from here while I'm to the fore."

And the next moment the uncouth form of Darby the Rambler sprang into the cabin.

When the stranger heard the voice outside, he sprang back and drew his revolver.

"Hold for your life!" cried Billy, as he stood between the stranger and the intruder. "Don't hurt a hair of that lad's head; he's my son."

The noise made by the intruder awoke the sleeping girl, and starting up from the sofa, she exclaimed:

"Oh, where am I at all? Take me home to mother—to Maurice."

CHAPTER X.

EILEEN IN THE POWER OF THE STRANGER.

WHEN the stranger heard the pathetic appeal

of the young girl, he sprang to her side at once, exclaiming:

"Certainly, Eileen, my darling. I will take you home when daylight comes. Do rest for a while. You are not strong enough to move from here, and the night is dark and stormy."

"Oh, Thomas—Mr. McDermott—why did you take me from my home? I'm a wretched girl. Why did you ever come near me at all?"

"'Cause he's a big rascal," cried Darby the Rambler, who was standing at the floor of the little cabin.

"Silence, you impudent fool!" cried the stranger, as he glared savagely at the lad. "One word more of your insolence, and I'll make you rue the hour that you crossed my path."

The daring lad was about to reply to this threat, but his father, Billy the Barge, restrained him.

"Darby," cried the boatman, "if you don't hould yer tongue, I'll bate you till every bone in yer body aches. Hould your tongue, I tell ye."

"I'll hould me tongue," muttered the lad, with a shrug of his shoulders. "I'll hould me tongue for a while, but the divil take me if I'll hould me hand if that black rascal and yerself come any more games on the colleen there."

There was a look of scorn on the simple lad's face as he gazed at his father, and his countenance grew darker still as his eyes were turned on the scowling face of the stranger.

The helpless girl, who had sprung from the lounge on which she had been lying, now riveted her gaze on the lad standing by the door.

It was evident that she looked to this uncouth being for assistance, if not for protection.

It was also evident that she shrank from Thomas McDermott with feelings of suspicion and even dread.

A few short hours previous and the guileless girl looked up to this man as the embodiment of all that was noble and generous.

While under his influence and fascinated by the arts of which he was master, Eileen was completely in the power of the dark stranger.

The danger with which he was surrounded, the apparent self-sacrifice which seemed to inspire his action, and the sad fate to which he was doomed, combined to cast a halo of romance around him; and the simple-minded girl was irresistibly drawn into the toils of the heartless adventurer.

When Eileen hastened to the boat-house, to bid the stranger a last farewell, the idea of eloping with him never crossed her mind.

If the wily stranger had even broached such a proposition during the months of his clandestine courtship, Eileen would have repelled him with scorn.

And Thomas McDermott was well aware of this.

And yet when the sensitive girl found that her old lover had returned, and that the new one was about to leave her forever, her impulsive heart was completely overcome, and without realizing the false position into which she was being enticed, Thomas McDermott had little or no difficulty in leading her into the boat.

'Twas only when out on the dark river, where she saw the light gleaming from the old homestead, when she heard her mother's cry of anguish, that she realized her forlorn position.

This simple Irish girl, with all her apparent weakness of character, had a strong mind and a truthful heart.

There is no doubt but that she would have fearlessly braved the world and all its storms with the lover of her choice.

There is not the slightest doubt but what she would have turned a deaf ear to all entreaties and appeals if she had entire confidence in the man by her side.

But when Eileen, on the impulse of the moment, requested to be taken back to her home and kindred, and when the dark stranger declared she was his for evermore, one glance at his face revealed to her his selfish nature.

As we have seen, this impulsive child of nature could risk death from the dark waters, but she feared to face life with the dark stranger.

When Eileen plunged into the dark river she soon became unconscious.

While Gerald Fitzgerald and the dark stranger were engaged in that fierce struggle, Billy the Barge was conveying Eileen down the river in his boat.

The cunning boatman did not wait to see the issue of the struggle, for more reasons than one.

In the first place he was anxious to bear the girl to the sloop, with the hope that if the stranger escaped he would be there to claim her.

In the next place he feared that the stalwart Gerald would overcome the dark stranger and then pounce on himself; and Billy was aware that if it was discovered he had a hand in the abduction, the country would soon be hot to hold him.

Above all, the avaricious ruffian hoped and prayed that, with the girl in his possession, and safe on board the sloop, something would turn up to enable him to earn the promised £200.

"At any rate," Billy muttered, as he rowed the unconscious girl down the river. "I'll take her to the sloop, and if the worst comes to the worst, the boat will be mine, anyhow."

Thus it was that Eileen McMahon was conveyed on board the sloop.

Completely prostrated by the excitement of the night and her struggles in the water, the helpless girl was no sooner restored to consciousness than she sank into a deep slumber, from which she was aroused by Darby's abrupt entrance into the little cabin.

Inasmuch as her last thoughts on plunging into the river had been of home and kindred, so when she awoke to consciousness, her great desire was to return at once to the old home-stead.

Eileen felt, as she gazed at the dark stranger, that his influence, whether for good or for evil, was still powerful over her.

It is not to be supposed that her great love for him, though it had received a rude shock, could be entirely obliterated in so short a time.

It is safe to assert that, if placed on an equal footing in the race for her hand, the dark stranger would have carried off the prize from honest Maurice Fitzgerald.

But they were not on an equal footing now.

Maurice was back again in the home of his youth, and at that very moment in search of his early love.

There was no stain of blood on his hand.

His whole career had been a noble and an upright one.

Not even to save his name from dishonor in that dark hour did he betray the friend of his youth.

And that friend was now repaying Maurice's generosity by stealing the girl of his heart.

All this, and much more, flashed through Eileen's mind as she sat in the cabin of the sloop.

Yet she felt that she was in the power of the dark stranger, physically and mentally; and that it would require all her strength of soul, all the resolution she could muster, to break the spell.

Thomas McDermott loved the winsome Irish girl as he never loved a human being before.

To win her he had braved danger and death; and the idea of losing her now, when all the world, as it were, had turned against him, was something he could not endure.

When he found her reclining in the little cabin, his heart bounded with joy and triumph.

All the dangers, and struggles, and humiliations, and weariness of soul and body were forgotten.

He thought not of the wound on his arm which was inflicted by his infuriated wife.

The prize for which he had dissembled and plotted—for which he had given up his soul to infamy and treachery—was now within his grasp.

And must he relinquish the prize at the bidding of a beardless boy—and a simpleton at that?

Was he a man of the world, who had carved his fortunes among the wild and lawless men of California, to be thwarted in his plans by a half-witted peasant boy?

The mere idea brought a smile to his face, but it was a smile of contempt and of scorn.

"If I crush this meddling fool," he thought, as he gazed on Darby, "this rascally boatman, his father, will, prove troublesome. I must play one against the other. If I judge the old man right, he would murder his own son if well paid for it. We must leave here at once, or my life will pay the forfeit. I cannot manage the sloop myself, or I would shoot both where they now stand. Curse the luck! we must get rid of this meddling fool either by stratagem or force."

Thus reasoned the stranger in that trying moment.

In the meantime he had succeeded in partly allaying Eileen's apprehensions as to his designs against her happiness.

Billy the Barge was in a quandary. The avaricious villain saw that he all but held in his grasp a sum of money far greater than he ever hoped to possess.

He knew that if Eileen were returned to her home, his stay in the country would be dangerous indeed.

Billy had no great affection for his simple minded boy, and no love was lost between them.

Darby had been a wanderer for years, finding a temporary home here and there among the neighbors, but never seeking a home in his father's cabin.

Maurice Fitzgerald and his brother had ever been kind to the half-witted lad, and Darby repayed their kindness with the most sincere and heartfelt devotion.

He loved the brothers with all the earnestness of his simple mind, and he regarded their sweethearts as beings for whom it would be an honor, at any time, to die.

This poor lad was as intense in his love as he was bitter in his hate, and he disliked the dark stranger from the very first moment he first encountered him.

Darby knew that he was about to carry off Eileen, and he was determined even at the risk of his life to thwart him in his wicked designs.

Billy the Barge was determined to reap a rich harvest out of his patron, and if his son attempted to stand in his way, he must be got rid of.

While the stranger was appeasing Eileen the cunning boatman was endeavoring to argue with the obstinate son as to the folly of interfering with matters that should not concern him.

"There's no use in talking, dad," cried the wayward boy, "I'm not going to leave this boat till Miss Eileen comes with me. You may call me all the names you can lay your tongue on, and bate me black and blue if you like, but the dicken's a foot will I stir till the colleen's took back. Oh, if but Maurice was to the fore now wouldn't he raise the ructions with yourself and the black-hearted villain. Begorra, do you think I could ever face him again if I let you stale away the pride of his heart. There's no use of talking, dad, here I am and here I'll stay until I see fair play."

The ruffianly father's face grew livid with rage as he saw the determined expression on his son's face.

"You stupid fool," he cried, as he sprang to the cabin door, "I'll tache you better manners than to meddle in your father's business."

As the angry man spoke he turned the key in the cabin door, and facing round sprang on his son.

Ere the lad could raise a stick to defend himself the father struck him in the face and sent him reeling against the side of the cabin door.

A cry of terror burst from Eileen's lips as she witnessed this assault on her only protector.

The stranger uttered an exclamation of approval as he hastened to the assistance of the brutal boatman.

"Bind the fool, Billy," he cried. "Knock him senseless if he gives any trouble."

"Don't lay a hand on him," yelled the boatman, "I'll manage him."

"You murtherin' thieves and robbers," cried the incensed lad. As he struggled in his father's grasp; "let go of me, dad, or I'll tear you to pieces. Oh, thunder and turf, is there no one to help me, at all at all."

As Darby spoke he struggled and fought desperately while on the other hand, his father strove to force him to the floor.

Growing more and more enraged during the unnatural struggle, Billy dealt his blows heavy and fast, while Darby, made furious by the dreadful punishment, kicked and tore with all the intensity of his wild nature.

The stranger looked on at the struggle, half amused, but much pleased.

The tender-hearted Eileen could not suppress her cries and entreaties for mercy, as she witnessed the punishment inflicted on her champion by the enraged father.

"Oh, this is cruel!" cried the girl. "Stop! stop! you will murder the poor boy. Thomas McDermott, if you had a spark of manhood in your breast you would save poor Darby!"

Thomas McDermott did not have a spark of manhood in his breast at the time. He had no pity for the lad who had the audacity to interfere with him or his schemes.

At that moment the father could have killed the son, for he felt that now he had a relentless and uncompromising enemy in that half-witted lad.

The unnatural struggle went on for some time, and yet no cry for mercy, escaped from the boy.

At length Billy's superior strength prevailed, and Darby is overpowered and forced to the ground.

In a moment the lad's limbs were bound, and he lay helpless on the cabin floor.

The father paused for a while after the struggle, with his eyes still bent on the helpless lad.

"You brought it on yourself, you scoundrel!" he cried, "For a penny I'd toss you into the river."

"Let's put him ashore," whispered the stranger to the boatman; "twill never do to take him with us."

"Are you going to murder me?" inquired the lad, as the stranger and his father, lifting him, bore him to the door.

"Twould serve you right, if we did," muttered the stranger. "How dare you interfere with me?"

"You dirty vagabond," returned the defiant lad, as he glared at the stranger "the day will come when you'll pay for this. 'Tis all your fault!"

Eileen was about to rush after the men, to intercede for the lad, when the door of the cabin was closed on her.

With nervous fingers, while her heart beat with apprehension, she endeavored to open the door. But her efforts were in vain, and she then realized that she was a prisoner.

"Oh, God!" she cried, as she fell on her knees and held up her hands in entreaty, "have pity on me this night, for I am a miserable, wretched creature. Maurice, Maurice, save your Eileen—save me from these bad men!"

She could hear the footsteps on the deck above, and the muttered curses of the boatman fell on her ears through the window.

Then all was still for some time.

"Oh, God!" cried the girl, "are they murdering poor Darby, the poor fellow that never harmed a soul. And his own father, too, the wretch of the world!"

Anxiously the girl listened for some time longer.

Then a cry of agony fell on her ears, followed by a splash in the water.

"They've killed him," she muttered. "The Lord have pity on me now. There's no one near to help or serve me. Who would ever think that Thomas McDermott was such a villain? I see through all his doings now."

CHAPTER XI.

MAURICE FITZGERALD'S RUDE AWAKENING.

As Maurice Fitzgerald bent over the senseless woman in the old homestead, and saw the deathly palor that overspread her magnificent face, he feared that the strange visitor's life was in danger.

"What will I do—what can I do at all?" he muttered, as he gazed at the heart-broken father and mother, and on the sorrowing sister.

"Get a doctor at once, Maurice," said Kathleen, as she roused herself from the stupor into which she had fallen when the lady fainted. "Get the doctor up at the village to tend to this poor lady. She must not die on our hands. We have trouble enough, God knows, as it is."

"I'll be off at once, Kathleen," cried the impulsive young man. "I'll mount one of the horses and be off. I'll raise the whole country to search for Eileen and Gerald. And I'll take Tom McDermott with me."

At the sound of the stranger's name, his wife opened her eyes and glared around.

"Thomas McDermott," she muttered. "Where is the fiend who dared to deny that I am his wife? Oh, why did you not let me kill him at once, and then I would have avenged James' death and my own wrongs?"

"You must try to remain quiet, ma'am," remonstrated Kathleen, as she bent over the lady. "Come now, and take a rest in the bed above."

"Rest!" exclaimed the excited woman, as she glanced around the room. "There's no rest for me till I've killed that lying wretch. Where is he?"

Maurice had been asking himself that question for some minutes past.

The young man thought of the accusations against the stranger, of Eileen's absence, and of the strange occurrences of the night; and his confidence in his old friend's truth and honesty was somewhat shaken.

"He tells a plausible story," thought Maurice, "and 'tis sorry I'd be to doubt him. But I don't know what to say or think about it. At all events, I'll go outside, and see where he is. I suppose he's taken shelter for a while in the barn."

"Where is the villain?" continued the woman, as she remembered her husband's flight. "Oh, fools, fools, you've allowed the wretch to escape. You would not believe my words of truth. You would not believe the statements of those honest people, when they told you that he had stolen the girl you loved so well. But you believed his lying tongue; and now you have allowed him to escape."

"I'll find him in a jiffy, ma'am; never fear," replied Maurice, as he moved towards the door. "If Thomas McDermott has betrayed me—if he has wronged Eileen there's not a spot on earth that will hold him safe. Keep quiet, ma'am. Go up to bed with Kathleen, and I'll go in search of Tom McDermott, and of Eileen."

Leaving Kathleen to tend to the lady, and to comfort her sobbing parents, the young man went out in search of the stranger.

As may be easily supposed, his search was fruitless.

"Where could he have gone?" muttered Maurice, as he was returning to the house. "He must have taken one of the horses, and made off to the village. Good heavens, if he should think of making off out of the country, without clearing me, I'd be as badly off as ever! I don't know what to think. I can't go among the neighbors to-night, without having him with me, and what can I do to find Eileen? Was ever an unfortunate wretch in such a hobble as I am?"

When the young man returned to the house after his fruitless search, he found the strange woman waiting for him.

"What did I tell you, Maurice Fitzgerald," she cried. "You did not find your false friend. Fool—confiding fool—he has given you the slip. Tell me where you met him to-night. I don't understand matters now, for my brain is almost wild with excitement. Tell me where and how you met him to-night; and then I may

be able to comprehend his actions. I know the wretch so well."

Maurice recited his adventures since arriving in the neighborhood, and told of his strange meeting with the stranger in the cavern.

He told of the stranger's agitation at the unexpected meeting, of his being overcome with fatigue and excitement.

Then he dwelt on the apparent willingness, if not anxiety, with which he hailed the proposition to proceed to the old homestead at once.

"Did he tell you," inquired the lady, in anxious tones, "how he happened to be in such a place and at such a time?"

The look of perplexity on Maurice's face at this moment was truly pitiable.

He could not answer in the affirmative.

"Why don't you answer me, Maurice Fitzgerald?" continued the persistent creature.

"Why, ma'am," he faltered, "he said he was so tired, as we came along here, that he couldn't talk much. And he said he'd tell me all about it in the morning. Oh, what a fool I was not to force it out of him. And Darby kept telling me all the time that he was a villain."

"Fool, fool!" cried the woman, in passionate tones. "To be sure you were a fool."

And poor Maurice did look very much bewildered at that moment.

"I see it all," continued the impetuous woman. "He attempted to carry off the girl, and he met with some mishap—some accident that baffled him for the time. 'Tis no wonder he fainted when he met you. And he was afraid to face your anger. He did not dare tell you the truth. So he came back here with you, in the hope of gaining time till morning, and then escaping from the country. Oh, Maurice Fitzgerald, you're the greatest fool I ever met."

The young man did not reply to this over candid expression, but he flung himself on a chair, and groaned in agony.

"Could any one think there's such villainy in the world?" he muttered. "Oh, Eileen, my darling, why did I leave you at all? Why was I such a madman as to fly from a crime of which I was innocent?"

The old couple and Kathleen were overcome with grief when they beheld the agony of the young man; but the strange woman appeared to be equal to the emergency.

"Cheer up, Maurice Fitzgerald," she cried, "and you kind people, do not despair. My false husband brought all this sorrow on you, as he has driven me almost mad."

"'Twas a dark hour that he came among us," sobbed the old man. "And far darker will be his own doom."

"I will avenge all your wrongs and mine," cried the woman. "They say that I am crazy—mad—but there will be method in my madness: and my vengeance will be terrible. As nothing can be done to-night, we will rest till morning; and then will be on the villain's track; good-night to you all. Strive to rest, for we may need all our strength on the morrow."

So speaking, this strange creature took Kathleen's arm, and left the room.

Maurice and the old folks conversed for some time, until Kathleen returned to the room, and prevailed on her parents to retire.

Maurice refused to stir from the chair, declaring that he would sit there until morning.

"I want to sit here," he said "and think of the past and of what's to come. My head is all bewildered; and I must be all right in the morning."

And the young man sat there till his eyes grew dim, and with his head resting on his hands, he fell into a heavy slumber.

He slept on till daylight came, when he was aroused by a rude hand on his shoulder, while a rough, low voice fell on his ear.

"Maurice! Maurice Fitzgerald! Wake up, man, this minute, and come along with me. 'Tis a nice way to be sleeping here, and the girl of yer heart getting stole away by the dark stranger. Get up, Maurice, and come with me."

The young man was on his feet in an instant, and staring at the intruder.

"Darby! Darby!" he cried, as he recognized the lad's voice. "What ails you at all? What has happened to you? I'd never know you only for your face."

The lad presented a woeful appearance.

His rough garments were almost torn to shreds, his face was covered with blood and bruises, and his eyes were glaring with excitement and anger.

"Don't mind me, Maurice," he cried, with an impatient gesture. "Don't mind me, but get ready, for yer life, and let's be off, if ye dream of iver seeing yer colleen again. And bring pistols along, too, man, for 'tis scoundrels intirely that we'll have to deal with."

"Obey the lad," said a voice at his side.

Maurice turned and saw the strange lady.

"Go with the lad at once," she repeated.

"And I will go with you."

"You, ma'am?" inquired Maurice. "Why what good could you do?"

"I must go, I will go," was the reply. "Do not attempt to detain me. Prepare at once, without alarming the people here. I am ready now."

"Come, come, Maurice," cried Darby, impatiently. "If you don't fly, it will be too late. Oh, mother, but I'm afraid we're almost too late now."

"Away, away," cried the lady. "Don't attempt to detain me. I will be the first to strike the wretch."

CHAPTER XII.

A RACE FOR LOVE AND FOR VENGEANCE.

It did not take Maurice Fitzgerald long to prepare for the chase after the villain who had torn Eileen from her home.

Oh, how the young man cursed his folly and simplicity at being so easily made a dupe of by Tom McDermott.

"I had the villain in my grasp," he muttered, "and I could have torn him limb from limb, if I had dreamt that he was the scoundrel he is. Oh, what a fool—a simpleton, I have made of myself."

Impatient and anxious as the young farmer was to be away in quest of the stranger and Eileen, he did seem to be half as eager as the deserted wife.

While Maurice and Darby were getting horses ready for the journey, the impatient woman strode up and down the path outside the house, and the stamping of her feet and her muttered exclamations denoted her eagerness for action.

Darby the Rambler spoke but a few words in answer to the young man's anxious inquiries.

"Don't be bothering me now, Maurice, with yer cross hackling," he would exclaim; "I'm in no humor for talk, at all. When we're fairly on the road, an' flying at that, I'll tell yees all that happened."

They were soon flying down the road on horseback, leaving the weary inmates of the old homestead still sleeping and dreaming, maybe, of the return of poor Eileen.

Though the young man's mind was absorbed with thoughts of Eileen and the treachery of the stranger, he could not avoid as they rode along, being impressed with the wild enthusiasm of his companions.

Maurice noted the dark, flashing eyes of the handsome creature beside him, and the compressed lips that told of the fierce determination to pursue her husband to death.

Though his own feelings toward the man were bitter enough, he felt that they were mild, indeed, as compared with the fearful impulses that urged on his vengeful companion.

And this was the woman who had advertised for him in the New York papers—the eccentric being who had been his fellow-passenger on the homeward-bound voyage.

Now, she was his companion on an errand of love and of vengeance.

Then Maurice turned to the uncouth lad who was acting as their guide.

In days gone by, he knew Darby as a light-hearted harmless fellow, who was ever ready for a hunt or a dance, a wedding or a wake, or a merry-making of any kind.

He could crack his joke and sing his song as gayly as any lad in the neighborhood; while his voice was never raised in anger, and he was never known to lift his hand against a human being, till the dark stranger came down into that valley.

Now Darby's nature was completely changed.

The terrible adventure of the previous night had transformed the harmless, loquacious rambler, into a relentless, revengeful bloodhound.

'Tis true, he disliked the dark stranger from the day of their first meeting; the simple lad's instinct taught him to read the man's true character, but now he regarded him with a burning, deadly hate.

'Tis true, the lad had heretofore no feelings of paternal affection for his selfish, ruffianly father, and he never before harbored a thought of resenting the blows that were so often bestowed on him; but now, as he brooded over the cruel outrage, he felt that he could tear that unnatural parent to pieces, that he could consign him to the vilest of deaths, without feeling the slightest remorse.

They had proceeded but a short distance, when Maurice, turning to Darby, inquired impatiently:

"Come, come, Darby, let's hear what has happened, and where you're leading us to? What ails you at all, man, that you can't speak out, and not keep us in the dark this way?"

Thus appealed to, the incensed lad, in his own peculiar yet concise way, gave Maurice and his companion an account of his adventure on the previous night.

He told of his following the stranger to his father's cabin, and of his tracking the pair to the yacht in the cove.

He told of his abrupt entrance into the cabin, of his determination to secure Eileen, and of the unnatural struggle with his father.

"When they had me tied hand an' foot," continued the lad, as his eyes flashed with anger, "I thought 'twas all up with the poor colleen, for I didn't care a straw what happened to meself; an' though I begged for mercy, 'twas only with the notion that I'd have a chance to be of service to her, if I could manage to get out of the scrape."

"Me brave Darby," interrupted Maurice, "I'll never forget you for that. But go on."

"When they lugged me up on deck," Darby continued, "they threw me down, just like the butcher would fling aside a sheep till he was ready to cut his throat, and then dad an' the black villain went colloging together by the mast."

"I know'd that dad had a bad heart afore—God forgive him, for I won't—but I didn't dreme he'd ever be tempted to put his own flesh an' blood out of the way for the sake of the dirty money. Bad cess to him."

"But whatever comethether the stranger put on him, they warn't long makin' up their minds about me; for they were on me again in a jiffy, an' afore I could say more than, 'the Lord have mercy on me sowl,' they had me flung into the water, tied an' all as I was."

"The fiends of Hades," cried Maurice, as his eyes flashed with indignation, "Did any one ever dream that such villains—such unnatural wretches—ever lived upon this earth?"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Julia McDermott, scornfully. "Maurice Fitzgerald, you don't dream, you can't imagine, what that treacherous man is capable of doing, when his dark passions are fully aroused. He is a fiend, and one of the vilest that ever cursed the earth."

"Go on, Darby—go on," cried Maurice; "tell us how you escaped from the water, man?"

"As luck would have it," resumed the lad, "the fling they gave me into the water burst the cord about me hands, an' me arms war free. Oh, wasn't that a Godsend, for then I was able to strike out for the shoal water in the cove,

an' as it war pitch dark, the villains on the sloop didn't see me. They thought I was done forever; an' we must let 'em think so, till we pounce on them."

"Well, well, Darby," inquired Maurice, impatiently, "what did you do then?"

"What did I do, is it?" returned the lad. "Why, I did the best job I ever done in my life."

"What was it? Go on, Darby," cried Maurice, growing more and more excited.

"Whin I dragged meself up on the strand," resumed the lad, "the first thing I thought of was to take ould knife from me pocket and set me legs free; and then, with that ould knife in me fist, and the burning rage in me heart, it came into me head to make for the sloop again."

"I didn't think of facin' the divils openly agin; for I knew I'd not have the ghost of a chance with 'em; but I had a notion that if I could manage to hinder 'em from puttin' out to say till mornin', I'd be fightin' half the battle."

"With this notion in me head, I clapped the knife in me mouth, slipped into the water agin' an' made for the sloop."

"Whin I got to the side, I could hear a terrible rumpus going on down in the cabin, jest as if Eileen was breakings her heart to get away from the villain."

"You don't think she went with him of her own accord, then, Darby?" inquired Maurice, in anxious tones.

"Her own accord!" exclaimed the lad, indignantly. "Why, Maurice Fitzgerald, what put that into yer head? The poor colleen was wild to get away from him—wild, poor thing, to get back to her home, and to you, Maurice."

"God bless you for those words, Darby," cried Maurice. "It takes a load off me heart to think that Eileen is true to me. Oh, won't I punish that scoundrel when I meet him face to face. But, go on, Darby. I'm dying to hear what happened then."

"As I was sayin'," continued the lad; "when I got near the sloop I heard a terrible rumpus; and then I heard that Eileen was spakin' her mind to the villain. I knew 'twould be folly for me to face them agin—so I stole up to the side of the vessel and looked around."

"Me villain of a father was bustlin' about on the deck, gettin' ready to put out, an' he kept mutterin' to himself all the time about the heap of money he was makin' of the dirty job, and layin' out for more. Oh, how me blood boiled within me, when I heard him, and heard the poor colleen down below beggin' of the black theif to take her back to her home. But there was no time for cryin', or anything else but work—and to work I went."

"As I was sayin', the night was pitch dark, and so, watching me chance when dad went down for something, I slipped up on the deck, and made for the sail. Then, with might and main, I cut away at the halyard, and every rope about the sail I could get my knife at. I'd have cut a hole in the bottom of the sloop, only I was afraid the colleen would go down with her."

"'Tis plain to ye what I was up to. I wanted to stop them from goin' out till I could make up to ye; an' faith I gave 'em some splicing to do fore they can hoist that big sail, at all ivints."

"When I cut all I could, I made over the side agin', an' into one of the boats at her stern. I cut both of them loose, sent one out into the stream, and pushed away in the other."

As the tide was runnin' out fast, I couldn't pull again it much. So I shoved in to the shore, and then I made me way to ye on foot as fast as I was able."

Maurice and Julia McDermott were lavish in their praises of the heroic lad, but Darby interrupted them by exclaiming, in an excited voice:

"Push on! Push on! And don't be botherin' me with your blarney. There, there, man—don't you see the mast of the sloop stickin' up above the rocks yet. Hurrah! Hurrah! We'll be in time to catch the villains of the world yet. Push on for yer dear lives."

A cry of exultation burst from Maurice, as he saw that Darby spoke the truth.

The woman at his side also sent forth a cry of joy at the prospect of hunting down her traitor husband so soon, and Maurice could see that her gloved hand was placed on the pocket that held her revolver.

"Darby," he cried as he thought of the brother who had set out after the fugitives the night before, "did you see anything of Gerald?"

"The diccunse a sight," was the reply. "Oh, murder in Irish, push on, push on! Don't ye see the sloop is movin' out of the cove. Bad luck to the villains, but they weren't long splicin' the ropes after all. Push on, push on! For the love of heaven, don't spare the horses!"

And they did push on with a vengeance.

Along the road by the river's side they dashed at a fearful rate, the excited Darby leading the way.

As it was scarcely an hour after daybreak, not a human being did they encounter.

And, as they dashed along at a headlong pace, all eyes were fixed on the mast of the little craft that was now moving slowly out with the stream.

Loud and fierce were the cries that Darby set up, as he saw that his enemies were about to slip away from him; and fiercer and more bitter, though not so loud, were the exclamations that fell from Maurice and his companion.

"Two fields more," cried the impetuous lad, "an' we'll be to the boat."

In that race for love and vengeance, the pursuers felt that every moment was a lifetime.

Now they could see that those aboard the sloop were endeavoring to hoist the sail; but they could not hear the bitter imprecations that fell from the lips of Billy the Barge and the stranger, as they were obliged to repair the destruction caused by Darby's knife.

Maurice could not see his beloved Eileen, as she lay sobbing and captive on the lounge in the little cabin; but his vivid imagination brought the picture to his mind, and every pulse in his body throbbed with rage.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" cried Darby, as he spang from his horse and ran to the beach. "Here's the boat, all safe and sound. In for yer lives. Ye take one oar, Maurice, and I'll pull the other one. Thin pull as ye never pulled afore in yer born days."

"Remember, Maurice Fitzgerald," cried the excited woman, as she took her place in the stern of the boat, "no mercy to the villain. Is your revolver safe?"

"The pistol is safe, ma'am," was Maurice's reply. "No mercy from me for the scoundrel."

"No mercy for the scoundrels!" yelled Darby, as he remembered his father's cruel treatment. "Bad luck to me while I live if I'll spare aither of them. But we must catch our birds first. Look! look! up goes the sail, and the wind is fair for 'em, too. Oh, Maurice, Maurice, pull now, for the sake of all that ever left you!"

"For Eileen and vengeance!" cried the young man, as he bent to the oar. "Darby, here's at yer with a will."

"With a will and a half it is!" yelled the enthusiastic lad. "If ye turn her on me an ace, Maurice Fitzgerald, ye may kick me from the ould Nick to Bedlam. Keep the tiller firm, ma'am."

"Pull on, for vengeance!" cried the passionate woman, as she kept her eye fixed on the sloop. "A hundred pounds for a wedding present, Maurice Fitzgerald, and you reach that yacht in time: and as much for you, Darby. The sail is up, and she's moving down the stream. God of vengeance, and must he escape me? See! see! the very elements favor the wretch! The sail is full and the wind is blowing out. Oh, pull, pull! He must not escape me!"

The rowers did not speak a word, but with bated breath and muscles strained to their utmost tension, they sent the boat flying through the waters.

CHAPTER XIII.

A BRAVE MAN'S STRUGGLES AND A BAFLED WOMAN'S RAGE.

Who can describe poor Eileen's emotions when she heard the splash caused by Darby's body, as it was flung overboard by the ruthless murderers.

"They killed him first," muttered the horror-stricken girl, as she knelt on the cabin floor; "and now they fling his body over. 'Poor Darby! I pray to God that I may share your fate ere long; for I would sooner die this minute than face that scoundrel again. Oh, merciful Father, did any one ever think he could be such a wretch with that fair face and smooth, false tongue?'"

At that moment the door of the cabin was unlocked and the dark stranger stood before her.

And dark, indeed, he was, in aspect and at heart, for there was a scowl on his face, and a dangerous fire shone from his deep-set eyes.

"Eileen," he cried, as he locked the door and placed the key in his pocket, "come here and sit on this lounge, till we have a plain talk—an understanding."

"The girl sprang to her feet, and stood facing the man, while she looked him full in the face, with an unflinching eye.

"Thomas McDermott," she cried, "I took you for a man—a gentleman; but you are a fiend and a monster. Why did you kill that poor lad? Oh, the vengeance of heaven will fall on you for that crime, and for the cruel way you have treated me. Again I ask you, will you let me go home to my father and mother?"

"Fool! idiot!" hissed the wretch; and his voice was hoarse with passion. "You know not what you ask. I tell you now, as I told you in the boat, that you can never return to your home again. You would be spurned from the door; you are mine, and mine only forever more. Cease this folly, and look at things calmly."

"Calmly, calmly," muttered the heart-broken girl, as she strove to collect her thoughts. "What do you mean, Thomas McDermott, by saying that my father and mother would spurn me from the door? I have done nothing to disgrace them. 'Twas you, you villain, who tore me from my home, ere I knew what a black heart you had."

A scornful laugh burst from the stranger ere he replied to this accusation.

"Tore you, indeed! Well, that's quite refreshing, Eileen, even coming from an innocent Irish girl. You know that you have loved me for weeks past; and that you gladly fled with me last night, when you heard that your old lover was coming back. Dare you deny that, Eileen?"

"God forgive me," muttered the girl. "I didn't know what a villain you were. I didn't know my own heart then. But I know it now, and I hate you and despise you, and I'd sooner be dead than be your wife."

Another mocking laugh from the wretch, as he exclaimed:

"Too late now, Eileen, too late! You should have made up your mind before. You are too changeable altogether, for your own happiness; and I will have to decide for you hereafter. You will soon learn to love me again. My love for you will only end with death, and I would suffer a thousand deaths ere I would give you up now."

"I will never be your wife, Thomas McDermott," said Eileen in a determined voice. "If you do not take me back to my home, I will plunge into the water again the moment I get a chance. You must not—you dare not—take me away against my will."

"And I tell you, once for all," returned the villain, "that you can never return to your home. Know you, foolish girl, that you have eloped with a married man? Learn from me, then, that at the very moment we were hurrying away in the boat, my wife—my crazy wife from California, was in your house in search of

me. Now, think you, will you dare face your home again?"

As Eileen heard these words, and realized her terrible position, a cry of agony burst from her lips, and she flung herself on a lounge, sobbing wildly.

"Oh, God have mercy on me!" she cried, "and take me out of the power of this fiend. Oh, father, mother, Maurice, how can I ever face you again?"

With a smile of triumph on his treacherous face, the stranger turned to the door, and left the weeping girl to her sad, despairing reflections.

On reaching the deck, the stranger found Billy the Barge as busy as a bee, preparing for the voyage.

The base wretch seemed to be as merry as a lark; and not an atom of remorse was in his heart at the thought of having murdered his son.

"'Tis a dark night, sir," he cried, as the stranger stood beside him; "but I can take her out with me eyes shut. Did you quiet the colleen?"

"Oh, she'll be all right in the morning, Billy," was the stranger's reply. "She's a little put out now; but she'll soon get over her pout."

"'Tis always the way with the women, sir. At the very time one thinks he's got 'em snug, then they'll be kickin' up their heels an' raisin' a rumpus about nothin' at all. Please give us a hand with the anchor, sir. And then we'll push her out a bit, and hoist the sail a little to steady her. 'Tis a fine night's work we'll be makin' of it. Ye wont forget the pinny you promised me?"

"I'll not forget it, Billy," said the stranger. "I'll put you on your feet if you'll take us safe over to France."

The anchor was raised in a few minutes; and then Billy sprang to the rope in order to raise the sail, while the stranger seized an oar with the purpose of pushing the sloop out of the little cove.

Then rose on the night air such a volley of imprecations from Billy the Barge as was never heard before in the banks of that lovely river.

"What's the matter, Bill?" cried the stranger, as he ran to where the boatman was standing.

"Thunder and turf?" was the reply; "some limb of the ould boy has cut all the ropes. Drop the anchor at once, sir. We must see to them."

Down went the anchor; and then, with the aid of a lantern, the two men examined the ropes.

It is needless to tell of the curses and blasphemies that fell from their lips, as they discovered the extent of the mischief caused by Darby's old knife.

Sufficient is it to say that they were loud enough and strong enough to sink a larger vessel than the *Eileen Alanna*, for that was the name given to the yacht by the stranger.

"There is no use in cryin' over spilt milk," cried Billy at length. "We must set to work to splice the ropes at once, and do it as fast as we can at that. Bad luck to Darby—the villain—I'd bet a five-pound note 'twas he done this mischief."

The stranger fumed for some time at the unexpected delay; but as he was a man of action, especially when danger hovered near, it did not take him long to make up his mind what to do.

With nimble hands, both men toiled at the ropes till daybreak; and when the morning's rays broke upon them, the little sloop was nearly ready for the voyage.

Then another volley of imprecations burst from them when it was discovered that the boats had been cut loose.

"I don't know what to make of it at all," cried Billy, as he stood at the stern, and rubbed his head. "The ould boy himself must have a hand in this work. I never saw the beat of it."

"Never mind," cried the stranger, impatiently. "Push her out in the stream, and

let's away from this cursed place. We'll soon have the whole country down on us."

In a few minutes the sloop was pushed out in the stream; but, thanks to Darby's cutting and hacking, there was still considerable delay in hoisting the sail.

And still poor Eileen was lying on the lounge in the cabin—lying there hopeless and helpless.

It was about this time that the boat containing the excited and vengeful trio put off from the shore above.

The stranger and Billy the Barge were so absorbed in their efforts to get the yacht under way that they had not as yet noticed the boat bearing down on them.

Nor did they observe the strong swimmer who had flung himself from the high bank of the river, and was now pushing towards the sloop with vigorous strokes.

"Hurrah!" hurrah!" cried Billy the Barge, exultantly, as the broad sail was at length raised. "Now I'll take the tiller and show you how she'll dance along."

"You infamous wretches!" cried a fierce voice at the side of the sloop.

The stranger and Billy uttered exclamations of astonishment at this unexpected denunciation.

"Who, in the name of Old Nick, is that?" cried the boatman as he let go of the tiller.

"'Tis me, you dirty hound," replied Gerald Fitzgerald, as he sprang on the deck and faced the guilty men. Here's at your lives."

Though taken at surprise at the unexpected appearance of his late adversary, the stranger's first movement was for the revolver in his breast pocket.

Ere he could draw the weapon, the infuriated man was on him and had him clutched by the throat.

"You black scoundrel!" yelled Gerald, "I'll choke the poisoned breath out of you this time; I'll make you feel the vengeance of an honest man."

The stranger felt Gerald's deadly clutch, while he saw the glare of that, vengeful eye; and he knew that once again he was in the grasp of a man who would show no mercy.

Thomas McDermott did not look for mercy before; he had no reason to hope for it now.

With resistless force Gerald dragged him to the side of the vessel, and despite the desperate efforts of the stranger, he was raised aloft for a moment and then flung headlong into the water.

A wild shout of exaltation burst from the occupants of the boat as they witnessed this desperate act, but the shout of joy was soon changed into one of rage, as they beheld the next scene in the drama enacting on the boat.

Billy the Barge stood stupefied for some moments after Gerald sprang on the deck, and while the brief struggle was going on between the two men, he awaited the issue with intense anxiety.

For the time he seemed incapable of moving hand or foot in aid of his employer.

But the moment the villain saw the stranger hurled into the water, he was all life and action, for he knew that the rage of the infuriated man would at once be turned upon him.

While Gerald was still standing at the side of the vessel, glaring out at his struggling enemy in the water, Billy seized an oar, and struck him a terrible blow on the head, and sent him over the side of the vessel.

"Grab the oar. Grab the oar, sir," cried the wretch, as he bent over the side of the yacht, and held out the oar to the struggling stranger.

At this time the boat was not more than fifty yards from the yacht; and its anxious inmates were almost wild with excitement.

"Row for the villain," cried the woman, as she stood up in the boat and drew her revolver. "Row for him till I send a bullet through his false heart."

"Save my brother, Darby. Save Gerald," yelled Maurice, as he kept his eye fixed on the spot where his brother disappeared beneath the water.

"He'll escape from me," cried the frenzied

woman. See! See! The wretch is dragging him on board. I entreat—I command you to make for the sloop at once."

"We must save Gerald first," was Maurice's determined answer. "Watch for him, Darby."

"There he is! There he is!" cried Darby, in an exultant tone of voice.

"He's swimming, he's swimming," cried the woman. "He's able to save himself. Push for the yacht. Oh, heavens, she's moving away from us now."

Without heeding this frantic appeal, Maurice rowed for the struggling man.

They were not a moment too soon, for Billy's treacherous blow had partly stunned Gerald, and if he had not received prompt assistance the waters would have closed over him forever.

When the half-unconscious man was dragged on board the boat the yacht was under headway, and dashing along down the river under full sail.

Again Maurice and Darby seized the oars, and started in pursuit.

Once more the frantic woman shouted and raved as she saw her false husband standing on the deck of the receding vessel.

Frantic were the efforts put forth by Maurice and Darby; but their struggles were of no avail.

The dark stranger waved his hat in triumph, and Billy the Barge shouted with joy, as they saw that they were leaving their pursuers far behind.

Who can describe the rage and agony of the occupants of that boat, when they realized that all their exertions had proved futile?

Who can portray the anguish of Maurice Fitzgerald as he saw his treacherous rival standing on that deck, and bearing away with him the fair Eileen?

And poor Eileen—all unconscious that brave friends were so near—still lay sobbing on the lounge in the little cabin.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MAD WIFE AND THE UNWILLING DETECTIVE.

THREE days have passed away since the morning of the abduction of Eileen by the treacherous stranger.

Head-Inspector Dillon is seated in his office in the Castle-yard, Castle street, Dublin, and he is thinking and racking his brain about an atrocious murder that has been committed recently in the very heart of the city.

It was one of those terrible, mysterious crimes that now and again shock the civilized world, and to which no clue to the perpetrator thereof can be discovered.

Richard Parker, an old and respectable private banker, was found dead in his office on the previous night, and from the circumstances under which the body was discovered, as well as the fatal wounds on his breast, there was no doubt but that he had been murdered.

The news columns of the morning papers were teeming with accounts of the outrage, while the editors, in the strongest terms, insisted that the police authorities should unravel the mystery without delay, and bring the criminals to punishment.

As there was not the slightest clue to guide the detectives, the inspector was sorely puzzled as to what steps he should take in order to respond to the demands made on him by the public.

Mr. Dillon was an active and experienced officer, and during his long and busy life he had been very successful in the work of hunting down criminals.

In dealing with this last murder, he was completely at sea; and as his professional reputation was at stake, he was much annoyed at his assistants' ill luck in failing to gain the slightest clue whereon to base a theory which could be worked up.

"A lady would like to see you, sir, on business of great importance," said one of his assistants as he entered the office.

"Show her in, Hayes, show her in at once," was the inspector's order. "Business of importance must always be attended to. Confound this affair last night! I never had anything to trouble me—to baffle me—like it before."

At this moment the assistant ushered a lady into the office, saying:

"This is the lady, sir."

"Take a chair, madame, take a chair," said the inspector, as he noticed that his visitor was richly dressed. "What can I do for you this morning? House broken into—plate and jewels stolen, eh?"

The lady took the proffered seat, threw back her dark veil, and the animated, handsome countenance of Julia McDermott was presented to the inspector.

"No, sir," she replied, in her clear determined manner. "I have not been robbed of plate or jewels. If you will listen to me for a short time, I will state my object in calling on you, and claiming your assistance."

"I'm all attention, madam. Hayes, you can retire for the present; I will ring when I want you. Now, madam, you will pardon me for asking you to be as brief as possible, as I have business of great importance on hand this morning. That murder you must have heard of."

"I will not waste a moment of your time, sir," was the reply. "But it is necessary that you should hear my story—my history, I may say, for sometime back, in order to understand my position clearly."

Then Julia McDermott gave the inspector, in clear and simple words, and without the least attempt at equivocation, a statement of what had transpired since her marriage with Thomas McDermott down to the time when he succeeded in bearing Eileen off in the yacht.

The inspector listened attentively at first; and then, as the stranger's crime and subsequent treachery was presented to him in the woman's forcible language, he became more and more interested, giving vent to his feelings by such expressions as "Dear me, how queer." "What a scoundrel." "I don't blame you, ma'am." "The poor girl." "Such an outrage I never heard of."

As the old man listened to the story, and looked at the handsome, expressive face before him, he could not refrain from admiring the brilliant creature.

The story is told, and silence reigns in the office for a few minutes.

The inspector is meditating on the best course to be pursued in this curious life drama.

"And now, sir," inquired Julia, "can I claim your assistance in hunting down the wretch?"

"You can, and welcome," was the cordial reply. "And I don't think it will be such a difficult matter either, provided—wait a moment, if you please."

The inspector went to his desk, and rang the bell.

"Tell Mr. O'Malley to come here at once, Hayes," was his command to the man who answered the summons.

Then the inspector took his seat near the lady once more, and in his hand he held a newspaper.

"A strange business in a quiet country like this, madam. And you're all Irish, too. Why, it sounds more like what would happen in France, or Italy, or some of those countries, where men, bad men, do not learn to control their evil natures. 'Tis very strange. And we thought here all along that this young man, Fitzgerald, killed Dunphy—your brother."

"You will find unprincipled villains in every land," replied Julia McDermott. "But I doubt if a greater scoundrel than Thomas McDermott ever lived on the face of the earth."

"Thomas McDermott!" cried a voice at the door. "Did I hear you speak of Thomas McDermott? What of him?"

"Ah, O'Malley," said the inspector, addressing a tall, gentlemanly-looking man, who had

just entered the room. "Yes, the lady was just speaking of a fellow of that name. And you're the very man I want to look for him. Listen to this."

As the inspector spoke, he placed his spectacles on his eyes, and commenced to read from the newspaper in his hand.

"Yesterday morning, during the gale off the coast, a sloop yacht was driven on the shore near Kingstown. The persons on board the yacht—two men and a young girl—were rescued with great difficulty. The young girl was borne insensible to the land. When conveyed to the hotel she was placed in charge of a nurse; and when consciousness was restored, she became delirious. It is feared that the excitement during the storm has affected her reason. We could not ascertain the names of the parties, as the men were not to be seen after their rescue."

"That's the yacht, and those are the villains," cried Julia, excitedly. "Thank God, he's once more within my grasp. Thank heaven, the poor girl has escaped from the villain!"

"Mr. O'Malley," said the inspector, addressing the tall officer who had just entered, can you tell me whether these men are about here still."

The officer did not reply at once.

His eyes were fixed on the beautiful woman before him, and from the strange, absent look on his face, it was evident that his thoughts were far away.

"Did you hear me, O'Malley?" inquired the inspector, in a louder voice.

"I—I—I—," stammered the man, as he withdrew his eyes from the beautiful woman, "I beg your pardon, sir. I think they are still in the city."

"Then O'Malley, I want you to lay your hands on them at once. Mind you, they must not get away from us. Listen to me a moment."

Then the inspector told his detective, in a few words as possible, the woman's story.

During the recital the man's expressive face underwent many changes.

Surprise, doubt, pain, anger, suspense, anxiety—all the emotions that oppress a troubled mind—were clearly depicted there.

"Now, you see, O'Malley," continued the inspector, when he had presented the case to his detective, "you see that you have a very ticklish job before you, and that you have to deal with a bold, unscrupulous, cunning man."

"I—I—I—," again stammered the detective. "I would rather not have anything to do with it. You know, sir, that you have detailed me on that murder affair. It will require all my time to trace that matter."

As the man spoke he cast appealing glances on the lady and on his superior.

It was evident that the task presented to him was for some reason very distasteful, and even repugnant to his feelings.

"Tut, tut, O'Malley," cried the inspector. "What's the trouble with you, man? This affair cannot take you long. And I don't know that you can do anything about the murder till we get some clue. We'll see what the inquest will bring out. In the meantime start out with this lady at once. Arrest the men, and see that the girl is well cared for. Don't stand there, man, like one half asleep. Why, if I didn't know that you were so temperate, I would say that you had been indulging too much. In love, eh?"

"Yes, in love, sir," replied the detective, as he forced a smile to his serious face. "I'll will obey your orders, inspector. The men will be taken, if they are to be found in Ireland. "Lady, I am at your service."

Julia McDermott arose, thanked the inspector for his kind attention and prompt action, and was about to leave the office with Detective O'Malley, when a commotion in the outside room attracted the attention of all.

"What's all that row about?" inquired the inspector, as he approached the door.

"A queer-looking country lad is outside here, sir," replied the man addressed as Hayes, "and he insists that he must see this lady here at once."

"That's Darby," exclaimed Julia McDermott.

Then turning to the inspector, she said:

"This is the faithful fellow who has come to Dublin with Maurice Fitzgerald and myself. Maurice is stopping at a quiet place out near Donneybrook; as he fears that he would be arrested until this charge against him is cleared up. I left Darby with him there some time ago, telling them that I was coming here. Something must have happened to alarm them. Pray allow the lad to come in, if you please, sir. He may have some information that would guide us in our search for this villain."

"Let the fellow come in then," said the inspector; "but he needn't kick up such a racket."

The man withdrew, and the next moment Darby ran into the room.

"Oh, ma'am, Mrs. McDermott," he cried, and his eyes were glaring with excitement, "there's the mischief's own black work goin' on. The peelers, bad luck to them, took up Master Maurice a while ago, for killing Jim Dunphy; and there comin' after ye now, ma'am, as fast as their legs will carry them. I run here to tell you what happened like lightning."

"Maurice Fitzgerald arrested," cried the woman, in an excited voice, and the police coming after me. "Why, Darby, you must be crazy. What have I done that they should arrest me?"

"Here comes the man himself," was Darby's reply, as a police officer stood at the door. "I thought I'd be in time to warn you to escape. But the luck is again us all the time, bad cess to it."

The excited woman stared at the officer, but before she could speak a word, the inspector interposed:

"What's the matter, Stevens? Have you any business with this lady?"

"I have a warrant for her arrest, sir," replied the officer, in respectful tones.

"Her arrest!" cried the inspector; "on what charge, pray?"

"On the charge of having attempted to murder Thomas McDermott," was the reply.

"Aha," cried the woman, as her eyes flashed with an unnatural fire, "this is more of the villain's work. I see his game now. He has learned that Maurice Fitzgerald and myself are on his track. He bears vengeance and he wants to get us out of the way. The plotting, treacherous scoundrel."

"This must be seen to at once," said the inspector, as he examined the warrant for arrest. "I see that you are spoken of here as Dunphy."

"Yes—yes—the wretch denies the marriage," replied the woman, bitterly. "Oh, but my vengeance will be terrible when the hour comes."

"O'Malley," said the inspector, I will leave this whole matter in your hands. Attend the lady and work the business out. Report as soon as possible. Good-day, madam. I am sorry for this extra annoyance."

"Was ever man placed in such a predicament?" muttered Detective O'Malley, as he led the prisoner out of the office. "In any other cause I could die for such a glorious creature. But now, oh, cruel fate, in what a fix you have placed me."

CHAPTER XV.

THE DARK STRANGER AND BILLY THE BARGE CONSULTING.

"If you'd be after taking my advice, sir, you'd let the colleen alone now, and make off to France or America as fast as ye can. I tell ye what it is, sir, the country will be too hot to hold either of us, if we don't be wanting to get our necks in the halter."

"And I tell you, Billy," replied Thomas McDermott, in a firm voice, "that I have not the slightest notion of giving her up without fighting to the bitter end. You don't know me at all, man, or you'd never speak to me in that

way. I never undertook anything in my life, that I did not carry through successfully."

"I see yer stubborn, sir, and I like yer spunk. But I'm dread ye're going too far with it altogether. If we had the luck to run safely over to the French coast, 'twould be all right; but now that we're driven here back again, and the sloop disabled, I can't see me way out of the scrape with taking Eileen with us."

"If you are afraid, Billy," said the stranger, "you are welcome to throw up the job at once. I can find plenty of fellows here in Dublin who will work for me, especially as I am able to pay them."

A dark scowl swept over the boatman's face as he replied to this intimation that his services could be dispensed with so readily by the stranger.

"'Tis easily talking now, sir, about throwing up the job; but 'tis too late for me to think about it. You know I daren't ever again show me face on the banks of the River Shannon. I'd be torn to pieces. I must stick to you now forever. And 'twouldn't be well for ye to give me the go-by either."

"See here, Billy," returned McDermott, as he bent a stern glance at his companion, "I want you thoroughly to understand that you cannot frighten me with any of your half-way threats. I want you to understand that I will be your friend just as long as you serve me faithfully, and do my bidding without murmuring. And I want you to know that, if you harbor the least thought of betraying me, I will put you out of the way the moment I suspect any treachery. I know that you are an unprincipled scoundrel; but I also know that you will be true to me while I have plenty of money. Do we understand each other now?"

"We do," replied Billy the Barge, in a sulky tone of voice. "I've put my neck in a halter to serve ye, and I think 'tis a poor return ye're making, to doubt me as you do."

"What's the use of talking nonsense, man," cried the stranger. "I thought you were a man of reason. I promised you so much money to land us in France. Have you kept your word?"

"I couldn't help it, sir. The storm hindered me making the coast."

"Well, then," continued the stranger, "a bargain is a bargain. Help me get the girl out of the country now, and I'll keep my word. I'll not give you the money until we're out of the country; and I'll never leave it unless I take Eileen McMahon with me."

"Sure ye can't take her in the way she is now, sir," said Billy. "The poor thing won't be able to move for some days yet."

"Then we must wait, that's all," cried the stranger. "But I firmly believe that she is not half as bad as she pretends to be."

"You may be right, sir; and you may be wrong. At any rate every minute we stay here is dangerous. You've managed very cleverly to get Maurice and the lady clapped into prison; but Gerald, the wildest man in the country, will be down on us pell-mell afore long; and that born-devil, Darby, is going about now like a tiger, looking after us. I'll stick to ye, sir, and no fear. But faith, I can't help thinking that the sooner we cut our sticks out of here the better."

"If all the McMahons and fools in the country were on my track!" cried the stranger, "I won't turn my back on Ireland until I take that girl with me. We've gone too far now to give up without a fight. And fight it must be to the bitter end. Can you rely on the nurse that's tending to Eileen at present?"

"I'm thinking we can, sir," was Billy's reply, as he proceeded to rub his head. "Though she bothers me sometimes."

"How's that Billy?"

"Why, you see, sir; she's very fond of money and the bottle, as most of them nurses are; but I can't make out why she's taken such a liking to the girl, for the likes of her never has much heart at all. And that's why I don't like to trust her too much."

"Are you afraid she'll betray us, Billy?"

"'Tisn't exactly that, sir," replied the boatman, with a puzzled expression. "I think

she'll stick to us so long as there's a good penny to be made. But she's a cute one, for all she takes her drop; and when she finds that we want to whip the girl away agin her will, she'll be kicking up her heels, and be trying to give us trouble."

"Oh, pshaw, Billy!" cried the stranger, impatiently, "What do I care for the airs of a drunken old woman? We are safe here for the present; and my worst enemies are powerless to harm me. When Eileen is a little better we'll be away from here. In the meantime, don't you stir out in the daytime at all; and when you go out at night, don't fail to put on that disguise; you're safe in that."

"Faith, but you may swear to that, sir," said the villain, with a smile. "'Twas only last night that I struck up against Darby in Sackville Street, and 'tis little he dreamt who the old huckster woman was he came near upsetting as he was gaping up at the shop windows. Oh, but 'tis Darby that's black again' us now, sir."

"He's only a fool, Billy," said McDermott, "and he can't do much harm or I'd soon put him out of the way."

"Faith, and 'tis he's the dangerous fool," returned the old boatman, with a dark frown. "And I'm sorry we didn't make sure work of him the other night. If it wasn't for his cutting and hacking the ropes, we'd be able to weather the storm and be safe in France now. Mark my words, but he'll give us more trouble yet than the whole of them put together. He's more dangerous than that mad wife of yours, sir, ten times over."

"Nonsense, Billy," returned the stranger.

"You don't know that woman."

"Faith, sir," replied the boatman, with a roguish smile, "I don't want to make her acquaintance at all, good or bad. And that's another reason I'd like to clear out as fast as our legs and a ship could take us. I'm sorry we can't take the sloop with us. 'Tis a pity to leave her there on the strand, without any one to lay claim to her."

"That can't be helped now, Billy. But I had almost forgotten. Did you find out about the officer that's looking after us?"

"I did that, sir. And I found out that he's the keenest hand in the Castle yard. His name is O'Malley. He gets all the big jobs to hunt down the murderers, and the robbers, and the like. And be the same token, they say he's after the man that killed ould Parker, the banker, the other night."

"After the man that killed ould Parker," muttered McDermott, as his face darkened. "Why, Billy, have they any suspicion who it was?"

"'Tis said they're all in the dark about it, sir. But you will find plenty to wager ye that Detective O'Malley will lay his hand on whomsoever it was before long. They say he's the mischief at ferriting out saycrets of all kinds; and that he never was bate yet."

"'Tis strange that this fellow should be after me now, too, Billy," continued the stranger,

"And the quarer still, sir, that you should be calling on the old gentleman the very night that he was murdered."

As the boatman uttered these words, his keen eye was fixed on the stranger, and there was a malignant smile on his villainous countenance.

The stranger did not notice the man's voice, but the words did not pass unheeded.

"There's nothing queer about it, Billy," he said, in a calm voice. "I called to get the balance of the funds he held for me—that's all. Take care that you do not mention it to any one. I don't want to be brought into this matter at present, when I have so much other trouble on my hands, as it would only serve to delay us here. And so this O'Malley is on the track of the murderer?"

"That's what I could learn when I went abroad last night, sir," was Billy's reply.

"And he's in consultation with that crazy wife of mine a good deal?"

"He's with her all the time, sir. And so is Dillon, the head inspector. I'm afraid, sir, that between them, Maurice and her will both be soon clear again. And then Dublin will be too hot to hold us, for all this is a quiet spot,

and the way we fix up stands to us. When Eileen McMahon is herself once more, ye can't keep her quiet."

"I've thought of all that, Billy," said the stranger, as he strode up and down the room. "I've thought of all that, man, and of the great dangers that surround us. But we'll beat them all yet, if fortune favors us."

"We'll have to have the Ould Boy's luck entirely, sir," cried Billy in an anxious tone of voice. "Oh, sir, if you'd only give up the notion of taking the girl with you, 'twould be an easy matter to give them the slip."

"I won't give up the girl!" cried the man, in a passionate tone of voice, as he stood with glaring eyes, before the boatman.

"Have your own way then, sir."

"Aye," returned the stranger, "that's just what I'm going to have—what I've always had—and what I'll have to the end, though the devil himself stood at the door."

"The Lord between us and harm, sir," said Billy, awed by the stranger's rash words and determined manner; "but you're a terrible man entirely."

"Terrible!" cried the stranger. "Why, man, you have not the least idea what I'm capable of doing when fairly roused. I tell you I am in deadly earnest in this fight, and I will win Eileen McMahon in spite of all the detectives, and mad women, and fools of countrymen in Ireland. Though death may stare me in the face every moment, I'll never draw back in my course. And let those that cross my path look well to themselves, I have only been playing with them heretofore. Now, I'll set to work in earnest."

Billy the Barge looked at the desperate man for some time; and the more he scrutinized the countenance before him, the more deeply did he become impressed with the character of the stranger.

"He's a great scoundrel," thought the boatman. "The boldest villain I ever set my eyes on. And he's cunning too—as cute as a fox. 'Twill be a hard matter to play a trick on him, and 'twould be dangerous to try. I'll stick to him while his money lasts, though 'tis a chance if he don't sup sorrow, afore he's through. Bad luck to me, if I'd ever git meself into such a scrape, and all about a colleen. I'll stick to him till I get a good haul out of his purse, at all events. And then, Billy, ye're a born fool if ye don't make tracks for parts unknown."

As the wily boatman thus silently pondered and planned, the dark stranger strode up and down the room, his mind fully occupied with the dangers that surrounded him.

It was evident that Thomas McDermott was fully aware that his enemies were waiting and watching an opportunity to pounce on him.

Foiled in his attempt to take Eileen off in the yacht, he was cast back on the Irish coast on the very day that his wife, Maurice and Darby had arrived in Dublin, on their way to the continent in search of him.

Then he knew that it would be impossible to remain in the city long before they would discover his hiding-place; and it was also impossible to bear Eileen away by the steamer in the helpless state that she was now in.

The poor girl was lying dangerously ill from the excitement and agony endured since she had been torn from her friends, as well as from the peril encountered when the yacht was dashed on shore at Kingstown.

In a small cottage, on the outskirts of the city, the stranger had sought refuge, bearing the helpless girl and an old nurse in the hack with him.

As the stranger and Billy the Barge were in consultation in the parlor below, Eileen McMahon was lying helpless in the bedroom above, and watched over by the old woman, whom Billy mentioned as being so fond of money and gin.

Yes; that old professional nurse was very fond of money; and she would pawn the cloak on her back to replenish the gin bottle; but for all that she had a heart—and a kind one at that.

Moreover, the old nurse had a keen eye and a sharp ear; and she had strong suspicion that the dark stranger was not acting in good faith with the helpless girl.

"I don't fancy the looks of that dark gentleman," the old nurse would mutter, as she sat at Eileen's bedside. "I don't like his look, nor the looks of that schaming fellow with him who says he's the girl's father. I'll keep me eye on them. And if they're up to any rascality again, this poor creature here, they'll find that Norah Brady is no fool, if she is fond of a drop."

Thomas McDermott paced up and down the room for some time; and Billy kept his keen eye fixed on him the while.

"He's up to some deep deviltry now," thought the boatman, as he watched the silent man. "I wonder what move he'll be at next?"

And the stranger was meditating a desperate stroke of villainy.

"I'll do it," he muttered, as he stood before Billy. "I'll be off at once to see this detective. I must throw them off the track for a few days, till Eileen is well enough to face the journey."

"What are ye going to do, sir," inquired Billy.

"Never mind now, Billy," cried the stranger, as his face brightened. "Get me the cloak and the wig, and the false whiskers. I want to pay a visit to the city. I want to call on this clever detective that you were speaking of."

"My laws, sir, what put that in yer head?" cried the astonished man. "Are ye mad entirely, to go and fly in the face of the law? For heaven's sake, sir, don't go near O'Malley, above all others."

"Don't be alarmed, Billy," returned the stranger, with an assuring smile. "I'm going to interview this O'Malley; and I'll soon see what he's made of. You remain here till I return, and keep a sharp eye on the old woman up stairs, and on Eileen."

As the stranger spoke he proceeded to change his appearance by placing over his dark hair a large gray wig.

A false beard of the same color, and a pair of gold spectacles over his eyes, gave him the appearance of an old gentleman of seventy.

"Don't be alarmed, Billy," he repeated, as he seized his walking cane and moved towards the door. "I'll be back here in a few hours. It won't do to work in the dark; and I must find out what the detective and that mad wife of mine are up to."

"He's a bold chap," muttered Billy, as he watched the stranger through the blinds. "The boldest I ever met in my life. 'Twill be as good as a play to see himself and that O'Malley nip-and-tuck at it. Bedad, I'm thinking he's able for the whole box and dice of them."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE UNWILLING DETECTIVE ENCOUNTERS THE DARK STRANGER.

As the disguised man walked along through the dark and silent street, he looked around carefully in order to ascertain if any one was on his track.

The night was dark, and his vision could not penetrate far into the gloom; but his quick ear caught the sound of footsteps close behind him.

"Some one is after me," muttered the stranger; "and I would not be surprised if it was that detective on my track already. Well, this is as fitting a time and place to meet him as I would care to select. Better, perhaps, than calling on him in the city. Let's hope 'tis the man I seek."

As the stranger spoke he stood under a tree, and awaited the approach of the man who appeared to take some interest in his movements.

And a lonesome spot it was for a private interview, or a deed of violence.

So thought Thomas McDermott, as he laid his hand on the revolver in his pocket, and watched the tall figure of the man as he approached through the gloom.

"A dark night, sir," remarked McDermott, when the man had reached the spot where he was standing.

"It is a dark night," was the reply. "But the moon will soon be out. I beg your pardon, but I would like to know if you live in that cottage beyond?"

"What business is it of yours, sir," replied McDermott, "where I reside?"

"There's no use in wasting words, Thomas McDermott," returned the man. "I know you; and I was just about to pay you a visit when I saw you leaving the house."

"And pray, sir, supposing my name is McDermott, what do you want with me? Will you be kind enough to let me know your name?"

"My name is O'Malley," returned the man, "and my business you can readily imagine when I tell you I am connected with the Castle Yard. Thomas McDermott, I would like you to answer me a few questions."

"That's a modest request," replied McDermott. "Won't you be kind enough to return to the house with me?"

"No, no, no," cried the detective, with an impatient gesture. "I want to speak to you here, where there is no chance of interruption or eavesdropping."

"Oh," thought McDermott, as he listened to the proposal. "The fellow is on the blackmail dodge, eh?"

Then, assuming an air of indifference that he did not feel, the stranger faced the detective, saying:

"Well, Mr. O'Malley, I am at your service. What is it that you desire to know?"

"Is your name Thomas McDermott?" was the detective's first inquiry.

"It is."

"Were you born near the village of Dunmore, on the banks of the Shannon?"

"I was."

"And you spent some years in California, where you married a lady named Julia Dunphy?"

"I spent some years of my life in California," replied the stranger, in a clear, calm voice, "but I had not the pleasure of forming the matrimonial alliance with the lady you mention. It is possible that the mad creature has imposed on you with her silly stories."

"Thomas McDermott," cried the man, in a stern, impressive voice, as he drew near the stranger, "don't attempt to trifle with me. Your wife has told me the truth, and nothing but the truth. You are a base villain."

"How," cried the stranger, in a voice hoarse with passion, "do you dare to speak to me in that insulting way. I will kill you where you stand."

As McDermott spoke he drew his revolver and presented it full in the detective's face.

The latter did not flinch a hair's breadth before the deadly weapon, though it almost touched his temple, and he could see that the finger of the desperate man was on the hair trigger.

He could see the murderous gleam in the eye that met his own; and he knew that prompt and decisive action was necessary to protect his life.

A moment only did the detective pause to gaze into that murderous eye, ere he cried out:

"Thomas McDermott, on your life do not commit murder again. There's crime enough on your soul now, God knows. I am the only friend you have in the world."

"You have a strange way of showing your friendship," sneered the stranger, as he still held the pistol to the detective's face. "A strange way to show one's friendship—to dog my footsteps, and address me by the endearing name of villain."

"Thomas McDermott," continued the detective, "I am your friend, though I know you to be a—"

"Hold, hold!" cried the stranger, in a hoarse voice. "Utter that word again and I'll kill you."

The words were scarcely uttered, when the detective, with a lightning-like movement, struck the revolver from the stranger's grasp; and the next moment the two men were engaged in a fierce struggle.

Thrown off his guard for a moment by the detective's sudden onslaught, McDermott was borne to the ground ere he could make an effort to shake off his assailant.

Then, with a fierce oath, he struck out at the officer's face, while at the same moment he attempted to clutch his throat.

O'Malley did not attempt to strike his op-

ponent; but, grasping the man by the arms, he endeavored to pin him to the ground and thereby overpower him.

Without uttering a word, the two men fought and struggled on that silent street for at least ten minutes.

Thomas McDermott soon realized that the detective's object was to secure him as a prisoner; and, as the consequences of such a termination to the struggle flashed into his mind, he fought with all the desperation of a criminal struggling for life and liberty.

Yet, strong and active as he was, he was not a match for his determined assailant; struggle and strike as he would, he could not shake off the powerful man who clung to him with that grip of steel.

Ten minutes of fierce struggle, and Thomas McDermott, for the first time in his life, found his master.

There he lay, panting and helpless, with a pair of hand-cuffs on his wrists.

And there stood Detective O'Malley, with the fallen man's revolver in his hand, gazing down on him with an indescribable expression on his manly face.

"Curse you," cried the beaten man. "I will pay you for this outrage yet."

"Thomas McDermott," replied the detective, "I told you that I was your friend. And now, that you are in my power, I tell you so again."

"Friend, indeed!" sneered the stranger. "This is an Irish way of showing friendship! What is your object in haunting me and assailing me in the dark? I know that you are in league with my enemies. Come, now, and tell me the price of your friendship. I am in your power, and I am rich. Name your price, and let me free."

"My price!" cried the detective indignantly. "Do you offer me a bribe, Thomas McDermott?"

"Certainly I do," was the reply. "What else are you after. Every poor man has his price?"

"You base wretch," exclaimed the detective. "You have not got enough in America to bribe me. Get up at once and listen to me."

As the detective spoke he assisted the fallen man from the ground; and placing him against a tree, he looked earnestly into his face and then at his manacled hands.

"Pledge me your word of honor, Thomas McDermott, that you will not attempt further violence, and I will take off the handcuffs."

"I'm your prisoner was the reply. "Do with me as you will, but I will make no pledges."

"Stand there, and listen to me then," continued O'Malley, "and you will judge whether I am your friend or not."

"Go on, I'm all attention."

"When I tell you, Thomas McDermott, that I am your true friend, you must believe me when I tell you also that the same mother bore us."

"What!" cried the stranger, as he sprang forward and gazed into the detective's face. "What humbug is this? You my brother? You are making a fool of me."

"Thomas McDermott," returned the detective, as the tears fell from his eyes, "I am sorry to say—grieved to admit—that you are my brother."

The stranger was so much surprised at this announcement that he could not speak for some moments, but stood looking into the manly, earnest face before him.

The detective was also silent for some time, and the agitated face told how deeply the strong man was affected by the painful position in which he was placed.

For some moments the brothers stood gazing at each other; and then the detective, as if actuated by a sudden impulse, placed the revolver in his pocket, unfastened the handcuffs, and grasped the right hand of his prisoner.

"Thomas, Thomas," he cried, in a voice that trembled with emotion, "don't you know your old play-fellow, Dick?"

"Dick—Richard! It can't be possible? Why I thought that you died in Australia years ago."

"Would to God that I had," cried the detective. "Would to God that I had never tried to meet my once-loved brother under

such circumstances. Oh, Thomas, Thomas, what came over you at all, to turn out as you have! Did prosperity and riches make you forget the teachings of our kind mother?"

Thomas McDermott held down his head for a moment, and did not reply to this appeal.

"Thomas," continued the detective, in tones that spoke more of sadness than of anger, "I have suffered much in this life, as you may imagine from the cloud that hung over my early days; but the anguish that I have endured during the past few days, since I learned of your conduct here, has broken my heart. My love for you, and my anxiety to save you, has made me a traitor—false to myself, false to my profession. Oh, why did you ever come back to your native land? Why did you come here to leave sorrow, and death, and misery in your path?"

"'Twas all that mad woman's fault," muttered the stranger. "She made my life a torment. She has hounded me to desperation—to destruction."

"Shame! shame!" cried the indignant man, as he flung aside his brother's hand. "How dare you blame that glorious creature? How dare you lay your crimes at her door! You vile wretch, you are not fit to live in the same land with her."

"We will not speak of her, then," returned the crestfallen man; "but you do not know her. You do not know how she has influenced my life."

"Did she prompt you to draw your knife on her brother?" inquired the detective.

"'Twas his own fault. He struck me first," was the sullen reply.

"Did she prompt you to betray the friend of your youth—the man who suffered under the accusation of murder sooner than inform on you? Did she prompt you to go down into that peaceful valley, to rob the same noble man of the love that he cherished so fondly? Did she prompt you to steal Eileen McMahon from her happy home?"

"Eileen came with me willingly," grumbled the stranger. "I did not force her. I was infatuated with the girl; and I could not resist the temptation."

"Scoundrel—liar!" cried the indignant detective. "I'm almost tempted to choke you while you utter those base lies. Oh, God, that I should have such a brother!"

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" cried the sneering villain. "I don't want to stand here all night listening to your preaching. What do you propose to do with me. I am in your power. Lead me away to prison, if you will. I ask no mercy even at your hands."

A look of pain—of intense anguish—swept over the detective's face as he looked at the villain before him, and wild and fierce was the conflict that raged within.

Honor, justice, professional probity, and the love of fair play urged him to proceed against the stranger—to punish him for his crimes and his treachery.

But the strong man remembered when they were boys together—when they played and prayed together; and he would not forget that the same fond mother watched over them in childhood.

"Oh, God," muttered the detective, "what am I to do?"

"Do your duty, of course," replied the stranger. "Lead me away to prison."

"No—no—no, Thomas," cried the man, as he covered his face with his hands, and sobbed like a child. "Oh, man, man, if I give you an opportunity of escaping from your terrible position—from the disgrace of punishment that awaits you—will you promise me to flee the land, and make amends for your crimes and your sins?"

"What would you have me do?" inquired the stranger. "I am in your power. And I must obey you in all things. But, remember, I have not craved your mercy. That is something that I will never crave—even of my brother."

"Wicked, proud man," was the detective's reply. "I will never ask you to crave my mercy. And, as God is my judge, if you do not do as I request, I will show you no mercy."

I cannot recall the dead to life; but I can compel you to do justice to the living."

"Well, well!" cried the stranger, impatiently, "what is it you require me to do?"

"In the first place, you must acknowledge Julia Dunphy as your wife, and withdraw the charge you have made against her."

"Go on. That's easily done."

"You must clear Maurice Fitzgerald of the murder of James Dunphy—you must admit that you killed the man."

"But if I do that!" cried the stranger, "I will be signing my own death warrant."

"Trust to me to get you clear," said the detective. "Though I ruin my own prospects in life; though I blast my reputation forever, I pledge you my sacred word of honor that you will not suffer for that crime."

"I promise," muttered the stranger.

"Last of all," continued the detective, "you must restore Eileen McMahon to her home; and swear to me never to trouble her again."

The stranger's brow grew darker and darker as he listened to this last proposition; and he reflected a moment or two ere he ventured to reply.

"Give up Eileen McMahon," he muttered.

"Tear myself away from that girl, after all I have risked to win her."

"Will you promise me—swear to me, that you will do what I ask?" inquired the brother.

"If I do," was the reply, "will you guarantee that I will not meet with further annoyances?"

"I pledge you my sacred word of honor that you will be allowed to leave this land in peace, to go where you will for evermore. And I pray that I may never set your face again."

"And the man who accompanied me from the Shannon?" inquired the stranger.

"That scoundrel can go with you. No one will molest him, as I alone know of your hiding-place."

"I accept your terms," returned the stranger.

"Swear then, by the God above you, that you will not attempt to play false; and that you will do all that I have asked of you. Hold up your right hand."

"I swear," cried the stranger, in a solemn voice, as he held his hand aloft.

"And I swear," said the detective, in tones that were as impressive as death. "I swear by the mother that bore us, that if you act a treacherous part with me, I will hunt you to the scaffold. Whisper, Thomas McDermott."

As the detective spoke, he placed his mouth to the stranger's ear, and spoke some words in tones that were not audible.

"Merciful God!" cried the stranger, as he sprang back and glared at his brother; "how did you discover that?"

"No matter," replied the man. "Now you are aware how far a brother's love may extend. Beware, guilty man, how you act hereafter. I have sworn to you that I will do my duty if you do not keep your oath. I have committed a great crime to save your life. I will not perjure my soul, if you break your oath."

The stranger was so much overcome by the intelligence conveyed in that whisper, that for some moments he could neither speak nor move.

"Here's your revolver," said the detective, as he drew the weapon from his pocket, "and don't ever draw it on your fellow-man again. Go back to your cottage, now, and early to-morrow I will meet you, disguised as you are now, at this address on Sackville street."

The stranger took the weapon, placed it in his pocket, but he did not open his lips.

"Do you hear me, Thomas," said the detective. "Come, come, man. There's no use in repining now. Make all the amends possible hereafter. Your crime is great,—let your repentance be great also. God forgive me for the part I am now playing; but I could not betray my own brother, however great his crime. Do you hear me?"

Yes, the dark stranger was listening to every word that his brother uttered; but he was not heeding the noble advice given.

"Do not be alarmed," continued the detective, as he laid his hand on his brother's shoulder. "The secret of your great crime is

safe in my breast. Go to your home, now, and down on your knees and beg God's pardon. Farewell, for to-night. To-morrow I will meet you again—and for the last time. I forgive you, Thomas, for the sake of our dear mother, who, I trust, is praying for you in heaven now. May God forgive you."

Still the stranger did not speak a word.

The detective looked at him for some moments; and then turned away.

"Good night, Thomas," he cried, in husky tones. "I will not say any more now."

The detective went on his way, leaving his guilty brother still standing beneath the tree.

"Give up, Eileen," muttered the stranger, as he listened to the retreating footsteps, "give up the girl for whom I stained my hand in crime. And this man who claims to be my brother—is the possessor of the deadly secret. Were he my brother a hundred times, I will not give Eileen up. 'Tis his life or mine, for he will hunt me like a dog, if I break my oath."

The stranger placed his hand on his revolver, drew off his boots and placed them near the tree; and then, with stealthy steps, and murder in his mind, he followed the footsteps of the brave man who had so nobly proved his devotion.

CHAPTER XVII.

SOME STRANGE SCENES IN THE LIFE OF THE IRISH DETECTIVE.

IN Erin's fair land there did not breathe a nobler or more self-sacrificing man than Richard McDermott.

Among his professional associates he was known only as Detective O'Malley; and none of them was acquainted with his early life—none suspected that he ever bore any other name.

Yet each and all were aware that some great sorrow or misfortune had flung a shadow on his path; and that this grave, determined, whole-souled fellow had borne more than his share of heart-pangs and misery.

His companions did not learn this from his lips, for he never spoke of himself or of his early days.

They could only judge, from his occasional bursts of humor and merriment, that he was once a light-hearted and jovial being.

As Richard McDermott, or Detective O'Malley, strolled along the silent street after that eventful interview with his brother, his mind was sorely oppressed, and his thoughts wandered back to the time when he was a happy lad in his father's home.

He remembered this same brother, when, pure and free, they rambled together over their native hills and vales, and dreaming day dreams of the fortunes in store for them in the western land of promise.

That younger brother had accumulated wealth in the western land; but he was now a criminal and a fugitive, and at his mercy.

And he himself—well, it will not be wasting space or time if we listen to his story:

When Richard McDermott was about eighteen years old, a circus company paid a visit to his native village, to the great joy of all the young folks in the neighborhood.

While the performance was going on, a fight took place between the country people and some of the soldiers from the barracks in the village, and in a few minutes all was riot and commotion.

The country people fought with their sticks; while the soldiers used their heavy belts,

The soldiers were driven from the tent, and pursued into the streets of the village, where they sought refuge in the taverns and in private houses.

One of the soldiers, who was rather conspicuous in the fight, was followed into a public-house by two young men; and he there received such a terrible beating at their hands that he died the next day.

Richard McDermott and another young man in the village were arrested for the outrage; and, notwithstanding the strenuous efforts of their friends, they were convicted, and sentenced to transportation in the penal colonies for seven years.

This was a terrible blow to the young man, and he felt it all the more severe from the fact that he was entirely innocent of the crime.

"Fore God," he cried, as he stood in the dock, "I had no hand, act, or part in the fight at all. God forgive the woman that has sworn falsely against me."

Richard McDermott was innocent of the crime; but his companion in misfortune was not.

The unfortunate young man could have proven his innocence, but by doing so he would have convicted his own young brother; and his lips were sealed.

The principal witness against Richard and the other prisoner was a young woman who lived in the village.

Her name was Margaret Barry, and she was a handsome, dashing, intelligent creature.

Though her reputation in the neighborhood was not the best in the world, her testimony on the trial was so clear and strong that no doubt was entertained by the jury as to the guilt of the prisoners.

This woman did not harbor any malice towards Richard McDermott; she had simply confounded him with his brother.

And this mistake was quite natural, as the two brothers were much alike in appearance.

We will not dwell on the parting scene between the young convict and his friends; nor yet pause to portray the anguish of the heroic young man who was compelled to toil for years in a penal settlement in Australia.

The only source of consolation that presented itself to Richard McDermott's mind was the knowledge that he was suffering for his younger brother's crime; and, as he loved that brother dearly, he did not regret that he was forced to suffer for him.

Four years passed away in that Australian settlement, and the young convicts have grown weary counting the links on their chains.

At this time Richard and his companions were employed with their gang in cutting a new road near the residence of the governor, who was a proud, tyrannical Englishman—a stern disciplinarian, though just, and even more than merciful at times.

It was a glorious day in summer, and the two men were working away with their spades at the foot of a hill, when up from the valley dashed a runaway horse, while on its back clung a female form.

"'Tis the governor's wife," cried Tom Birch, Richard's companion.

Down went the spades, and out on the plain ran the two convicts.

Young McDermott was as swift as a deer, and in less than five seconds his strong arms held the bridle of the runaway horse, while the half-unconscious lady was lifted from the saddle by his fellow-convict.

The two men gazed for a moment on the pale, beautiful face before them, as the lady opened her eyes and muttered some words of thanks.

"Gracious God!" exclaimed Tom Birch, as he turned to young McDermott, "'Tis Mag Barry, the woman that informed against us long ago."

The blood mounted to the lady's face, and pushing the convicts rudely aside, she said:

"How dare you speak in that way, you scoundrel? I'll have the governor horsewhip you to death. Do you know, you vile wretch, that you are addressing the governor's wife?"

Tom Birch met the lady's look of indignation with a calm, vengeful eye; and there was no evidence of fear or trembling in his voice as he replied:

"You may be the governor's wife now, ma'am; but when I saw you last you were known as Mag Barry. 'Fore God, I have good reason to know you, and to curse you, too, for 'twas you that sent Dick and me here as convicts."

The lady's face grew red and pale in turns, as she listened to this denunciation.

"And you, sirrah," she said, turning suddenly on young McDermott. "Do you—have you the audacity to assert that this villain is right? Did you hear what he said, and will you countenance this base assertion?"

"Lady," replied Richard McDermott, as he

lifted his convict's cap with an air of a courtier, "I never saw your face before. My mate here is mistaken."

"Good God!" said Tom Birch, "do you mean to tell me, Dick McDermott, that I must not believe my own eyes? Look at her again, man. Don't you remember Mag Barry? Don't you mind the day you stood in the dock and called on God to forgive her for swearing falsely against you. Dick McDermott, as sure as God is above us, that woman is now standing before you, and it is well she knows it."

"You are mistaken, Tom," was McDermott's calm reply. "I never laid my eyes on this lady before."

"You'll suffer for this outrage," cried the lady, as she turned away.

"The governor may cut me limb from limb," returned the excited convict; "but he can't hinder me from having my revenge on you. He can't hinder me from telling the world that his wife was a —"

Ere the rash man could finish the sentence Richard McDermott sprang on him, and clutched him by the throat, as he exclaimed:

"Fool—madman! Don't say another word, or, for your own sake, I'll choke the life out of you. Lady, forgive him. He doesn't know what he's saying."

The indignant woman glared at the man who had grossly insulted her, and then, without uttering another word, she walked towards the horse, who was now standing quietly by, nibbling the grass at his feet.

"Will you trust the horse again, lady?" inquired Richard McDermott, as he hastened to her assistance.

"I'll trust him," she replied, as she looked earnestly into the young convict's face. "And I'll trust you, my noble fellow."

"You may trust me with your life, ma'am," said young McDermott. "But don't be hard on my chum here. God knows we've a hard time enough of it as it is. Don't get the governor against him."

"I'll remember you both," returned the lady, with a significant smile. "And you'll hear from me ere long. Thanks, young man. Farewell." And the next moment the two convicts were gazing after the brilliant creature, as she dashed over the plain on the spirited horse.

"Dick McDermott," cried Tom Birch, "I didn't dream that you were such a mean cringer. You know in your heart that that's Mag Barry."

"I'm not a cringer, Tom Birch," was the indignant reply. "And I know the woman as well as you do. But I'd be a mean hound to turn on her now, and turn her husband against her, and break up the peace of a happy family, all to satisfy a small spite."

"By the God above us, but I'll do it," cried Tom Birch. "If it wasn't for her we'd not be convicts here to-day, wasting our young days in misery."

"If you open your lips to speak a word to any one about that woman, Tom Birch," said McDermott, in a stern voice, "I'll kill you. For shame, man, to think of such a thing at all. What good will it do you or me to bring disgrace and misery on that woman? What is the earthly use of turning her husband against her? What did that innocent child of her's ever do to us, that we should blight its life by throwing a stone at his mother? Oh, Tom Birch, if you are a convict, remember that there's a just God above us, and He never taught us to bear malice against our fellow-beings. He even told us to forgive those that injure us. Don't forget your early training, Tom Birch. Don't forget your manhood by turning on a helpless, and, maybe, penitent wife and mother."

"She didn't act much like a penitent woman when she turned on me like a tiger," grumbled Tom Birch. "However, Dick, you're in the right, and I'm wrong. When I come to think of it, 'twould be a small thing to do to expose her now. Give me your hand, man; and may God bless you for the lesson you gave me. I'll never be as good a man as you, but I'll never do a mean action while I think of your decent, manly words to-day."

As the man spoke he grasped Richard Mc-

Dermott's hand, and the tears fell down the sunburnt cheeks of the convicts as they resumed their labor.

That night Richard McDermott was summoned to the mansion of the governor.

He found the stern Englishman and his beautiful wife in the drawing-room awaiting him; while a merry little fellow, scarcely two years old, was prattling and sporting around his father.

"Richard McDermott," said the governor, "I sent for you to-night in order that I may thank you for your brave action in saving my wife's life to-day."

"'Twas nothing, sir," remarked the young convict. "Any one would have acted as I did."

"I would like to know, young man," resumed the governor, "if you ever saw that lady before? Look at her well, sir, and answer me truly."

The embarrassed convict gazed for a moment on the calm, happy face of the lady before him, and he hesitated to reply.

"Tell the truth, young man," said the lady, with an assuring smile. "Do not hesitate a moment, I beg of you. Tell the Governor where and when you saw me."

"Lady," stammered the young man, "I—I don't know what to say. I would cut my tongue out ere a word of mine should injure any human being."

"Speak the truth, Thomas McDermott," commanded the stern governor.

"Speak the truth, young man," pleaded the lady. "As if you were on your oath, or on your dying bed. I request it—I implore it of you."

"I saw the lady in Ireland, sir," returned the perplexed man, as he turned his eyes on the woman, in the hope of gaining some clue to guide him in the strange interview.

"You saw her," continued the governor, "for the last time when you stood in the dock and denounced her for swearing falsely against you."

"As God is my judge, sir," returned the young man, in a solemn voice, "I was innocent of the crime for which I had to suffer. I don't blame the lady for it now, for she thought that she spoke the truth. But 'twas hard, sir, to meet such a fate, and I couldn't help saying what I did then."

"How can you say that you are innocent?" cried the lady, "when I saw you beating the soldier so cruelly as he lay on the floor—you and that fellow that I met to-day?"

"You are mistaken, lady," returned the convict, in respectful tones. "It cannot do any harm to tell the truth now; and a lie won't serve me. It was my young brother that you saw that night beating the soldier."

"Why didn't you say so, then?" demanded the governor. "Why didn't the hound confess his crime, and not let you suffer for it?"

The young convict held down his head as he replied: "He is my brother, sir."

"Richard McDermott," said the governor, as he sprang from the chair and grasped the convict's hand, "you're a noble fellow; and it's a thousand pities that you should suffer for that dastard brother of yours. But you will suffer no more. I will procure your pardon, and I will be your friend forever. Would to God that I had known of this before."

"Don't blame me, young man," said the lady, as with tears in her eyes, she laid her hand on the man's shoulder. "I was certain that you beat the soldier. Good, generous man, I can never forgive myself for having wronged you. How can I ever repay you for your noble conduct to-day, when that foolish man denounced me?"

"Forgive him, ma'am," replied Richard McDermott. "He's very sorry now for what he said. And I'll warrant you he'll never open his lips again to say a word against you. Forgive the poor fellow, for he was not himself at all." "McDermott," said the governor, as his voice trembled with emotion, "I am much indebted to you, and so is my wife, for you have saved us much pain—much annoyance. I do not care that the world should know what I have known from the hour I first met her, of my wife's early life. Whatever may have been

her faults, she is faithful and loving now. I am a stern, unbending man, but I try to be just. The world would condemn me if they knew what you know. Yet, if it should happen that our secrets were exposed, it would not change my feelings towards my wife. I defy the tongue of calumny to alter my feelings towards her. I speak thus plainly to you, that you may inform your fellow in misfortune that he cannot injure this lady by any denunciations."

"Tom Birch will never open his lips on the subject again, sir," said McDermott.

"Well, well," resumed the governor, "I trust that he will not; but it may be as well for him to know that if he breathes aught against my wife, I will kill him with my own hand."

"I'll answer for him with my life," returned the convict. "And I trust, sir, that I am not asking too much, if I beg of you to extend your mercy to Tom Birch as well as to me. He has suffered enough already. Oh, do sir, and you, lady, do your best for the poor fellow. His heart is in the right place, only he's a little foolish."

"We'll see about it," said the governor. "And now, my kind fellow, you will have to take a glass of wine with me. Forget that you are a convict, and remember that henceforth you are my friend and equal."

"And mine," said the lady. "I hope to God that my son will be as good and as noble a man as you are."

Right royally was the poor convict entertained by the governor and his wife.

The accomplished woman strove in every way to make him forget his position.

When he had partaken of the bountiful supper placed before him, he was compelled to remain with his hosts during the night, and the poor convict was delighted with the rare treat offered him.

The governor talked with him about the future, and the wife played and sang the grand old Irish airs that he remembered so well.

Richard McDermott had at length found an oasis in his desert life, and as he rested his weary soul on that green spot, and drank of the well of kindness that flowed so freely before him, he forgot the parched plain over which he had traveled for four weary years.

No more toil on the road for that convict; no more herding with the rude gang who had been his companions for years; for henceforth his home was in the governor's house, and while he was nominally a servant, he was, in reality, the companion and friend of the happy pair.

Six months passed away, and Richard McDermott received his pardon—the queen's pardon—at the earnest solicitation of the governor.

Tom Birch, his fellow-convict, was pardoned in like manner.

Free men once more, the young men started out in life again, Richard McDermott returning to his native land under the assumed name of O'Malley, while his companion started to seek his fortune in the Australian wilds.

The two convicts never met again in this world.

Before leaving Australia, Richard McDermott received letters of introduction from the governor to influential friends in England.

Through their influence he was enabled to procure a situation in a commercial house in Liverpool.

A few years after the governor and his wife returned to England, and the friendship and intimacy so strangely formed was again renewed.

The governor is now head inspector of the Dublin Police, and Richard McDermott, who was ever after known as Detective O'Malley, is his chosen friend and confidant.

Before leaving Australia, the young man had prevailed on the governor to write to his parents in America, telling them that their son was dead.

He had a strong desire to meet his parents, but he did not care to encounter the brother who had proved himself a coward in the hour of need.

And now this same brother is in Ireland, and

Detective O'Malley has been detailed to hunt him down.

Danger and disgrace lie in the path of the dark stranger, but that noble brother has come forward to lead him to safety, even at the great risk of blasting his own reputation for life.

Is it any wonder, then, that Detective O'Malley's mind should be oppressed with forebodings, as he walked along that silent street?

Could it be possible that the earth held a fiend who would dream for a moment of taking the life of such a brother?

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DARKEST CRIME IN THE CAREER OF THE DARK STRANGER.

WILD, desperate and murderous were the thoughts that rose to the dark stranger's mind as, with silent steps and revolver clutched in his hand, he followed his brother through that dark street.

"I cannot—I will not—give up my Eileen McMahon," he muttered, as he strode along. "He is asking too much—he knows too much—and he may change his mind before morning. I am surrounded on all sides by enemies, and now my own brother comes forward against me, to lead me, perhaps, to the gallows. 'Tis a life and death struggle, and I will fight it out to the bitter end. I will destroy all who come between me and the girl I have sworn to make my own."

On and on he went, until he was within five yards of the tall figure before him.

Looking around him on all side to see that no witness was near, he raised the deadly weapon and aimed at the figure before him.

Thomas McDermott was an expert with the pistol, and never, even in the hour of deadly peril, did he fail to send the bullet home.

Yet now his hand trembled as if it had been suddenly struck with palsy, and he could feel the fierce throbbings of his heart as it beat violently against his breast.

The would-be assassin was completely unnerved.

At that moment the bell of a neighboring church rang out the vesper chimes, for it was the Sabbath evening, when all should be peace and good will.

"I cannot do it," muttered the stranger, as he placed the pistol in his pocket, and turned to retrace his steps. "My hand trembles, my heart throbs fearfully, and my brain is on fire. I cannot kill him, even to save my own life—even for the sake of Eileen McMahon."

Fearing to trust himself a moment longer in the neighborhood, he ran back to the street to where he had left his shoes.

And Detective O'Malley went on his way, listening to the bells, and never dreaming that death hovered so near him.

"I will not give up Eileen McMahon," again muttered the stranger, as he hurried back to the house. "She is strong enough to travel now; and this very night, this very hour, I will fly with her from this land. The steamer leaves for Liverpool to-night. We will get on board at once, and give them all the slip. Ha! ha! ha! mad wife and simple brother of mine, I will baffle you yet. Maurice Fitzgerald, you will never lay eyes on your Eileen Alanna again. Ho, for Liverpool! and then to the end of the world, if needs be, with Eileen McMahon. Not one foot out of Ireland without her."

With hurried steps, the stranger ran back to the cottage, and burst in on Billy the Barge, just as that worthy was quietly enjoying his pipe.

"Quick! quick, Billy!" cried the stranger. "Run at once and get a cab. We must away from here at once. We must all start for Liverpool this very night."

"Are you going to take the girl with you, sir?" inquired Billy, as he gazed in astonishment at the excited and desperate man.

"To be sure we are," the stranger cried. "Do you think I'm mad, to leave her here after me. To leave her to Maurice Fitzgerald?"

"Faith, sir, I'm thinking you'd be mad to dream of moving her now."

"Billy, Billy!" cried the stranger, in passionate tones, "we can't stand on trifles. Our hiding place has been discovered, and all our enemies will be down on us in the morning—"

maybe within an hour. I've just met that Detective O'Malley, and he knows where we are. He is ready to pounce on us in the morning. I have succeeded in baffling him with promises for the time. Hurry, man, hurry. We must get away at once."

"You'll have to take the nurse with ye, sir," returned the boatman. "And I'm afraid 'twill be a hard matter to get her to go with us."

"I'll see to that. You run off for the cab. We haven't a minute to spare."

Seeing that further remonstrance was useless, Billy hurried out of the house, muttering as he went: "There'll be the mischief's own work to-night, I'm thinking—for Eileen McMahon will never go quietly with him; she has her senses now, and she'll kick up such a row as to bring the whole town down about us."

In the room above stairs, Eileen McMahon was sitting on her bed, engaged in an earnest conversation with the nurse.

The poor girl, under the careful treatment of Norah Brady, had recovered from the effects of her anguish and terror; and she had been telling the nurse a portion of her adventures during the eventful days just passed.

"You will try to save me from the villain, won't you?" she pleaded, as she looked earnestly at the woman. "Oh! don't let him take me away from here. Aid me to fly from him, and I will bless you forever."

"I'll do all I can for you, my poor creature," returned the old woman. "But we'll have to be very careful, for they're watching me like a cat would watch a mouse. And they're black, desperate men, that wouldn't stop at anything. We'll have to be very careful."

"But isn't there law and justice here in Dublin?" cried the girl. "Will they allow a villain like this to drag a poor girl from her home, and take her away to a foreign land against her will? Oh, if you could only let my father and mother know where I am. But no, no, I can never face them again. Oh, God, what can I do? where will I face to? What will become of me?" and Eileen McMahon covered her face with the sheet, and wept bitterly.

"Don't take on so, my poor child," said the woman. "They won't harm you while I'm with you; and, with the blessing of God, I'll find a way before long to get you back to your home and your friends. Trust in me, to get the best of the two blackguards yet."

"Oh, God bless you, and do it," muttered Eileen.

"Whist, whist," whispered the woman, as she held up her hand in a warning manner. "There's one of them coming up stairs now. Pur tend to be asleep, and leave me to deal with them."

A moment after a knock at the room door announced a visit from the stranger.

"Come in," cried the old woman.

"Is she asleep?" inquired the man, as he opened the door, and looked at Eileen.

"She is, sir," was the reply. "And she's sleeping all the time, poor thing. And when she isn't sleeping she's crying and fretting about her home. 'Tis a crying shame not to take her back."

"Nonsense, woman," said the stranger. "She'll soon get over her pouting. But I have no time to talk about such folly now, for we must be away at once. Get her ready, and get yourself ready for a journey. You tend to the girl, and I will pay you well."

"Get her ready for a journey, is it?" inquired the woman, in astonishment; "why, sir, 'twould be the death of hersure if you take her out of this house to-night."

"Woman," said the stranger, as his eyes flashed with a fierce fire. "Woman, she must leave here, and at once. Don't sit there staring at me, but do as I tell you. The cab will be at the door in a few minutes. Tell her what you like, but warn her that if she attempts to make a fuss it will be worse for herself. We will start from the North Wall for Liverpool in an hour. Get ready at once. Be faithful to me, keep a silent tongue in your head, and I will reward you beyond your hopes. Attempt any treachery with me and I will kill you as I would a dog. I am a desperate man, and I'll stand no nonsense."

"God between us and harm," muttered the woman, as he left the room. "What will I—what can I do at all? Hush, hush, my poor darling. Don't say a word, but listen to me, as I whisper into your ear. I'll save you yet. You'll never cross the sea with that villain."

The stranger descended the stairs to the little parlor, where a small trunk and valise were lying on the floor.

He had made all his hurried preparations for the journey; and he now strode up and down the room, muttering exclamations of impatience at Billy's delay in bringing the cab.

"If we catch the steamer," he said in a voice of exultation, "we will be all right. Then I can laugh at them all, and Eileen will be mine forever. Ha! ha! ha! How wild that crazy wife of mine will be. How Maurice Fitzgerald will tear his hair with rage. And how that brother of mine—the great detective—will rave when he finds that I have given him the slip. Fools, fools—all of them. Thomas McDermott is more than a match for as many more."

"Thomas McDermott, beware!" sang out a clear, strong voice at the front window. "Remember your oath and mine! Remember that the gallows is staring you in the face if you do not keep your solemn oath! False man—treacherous fool, beware how you trifle with me!"

"Fiends and furies!" yelled the stranger, as he sprang towards the window. "I will not be dogged in this way. Your death be on your own head." As the infuriated man spoke he drew his revolver and fired.

The movement was so sudden that the detective had not time to spring aside.

The report had scarcely died away when a deep groan outside the window told that the bullet had found its billet in the body of the generous brother.

At that moment the sound of a hurrying vehicle fell on the stranger's ears.

"Here comes Billy," he said, as he placed the revolver in his pocket. "Now for flight and safety. The fool—the fool—he would pursue me. He brought his death on himself. I did not want to kill him."

As the murderer spoke he raised the window and gazed out into the little garden in front of the house.

There was the form of his brother, half covered by the bushes that grew up to the window.

The noble, generous, high-toned gentleman, who had never in his life harbored an unmanly thought, was struck down by the brother who had blighted his early youth, and who had crossed his path in manhood to repay with dark treachery the kindness that all the gold in the world could not purchase.

"He's dead!" muttered the stranger, "and my secret is buried with him. He's dead—and now for flight and safety. Oh, Eileen McMahon, what crimes I have committed for you! But had I to face the fiend himself, I'll never give you up. I've perjured my soul, and covered my hands with blood, all for your sake. And now I defy the fiend himself to drag you from me."

"Here's the cab, sir," said Billy, as he rushed into the room, "an make haste, sir, make haste. I think there's some one following us. What are you looking so wild about? Has anything happened while I was gone?"

"Oh, no, Billy. I had some words with the nurse. She didn't want to have Eileen moved to-night. But she's all right now, and we'll be off. Go up stairs and tell them we're waiting for them. Tell her to be quick; and that I don't want any nonsense or delay."

"Faith, we can't afford it, sir. For, unless I'm mistaken, they're on our track in earnest." "Go on, go on, Billy," cried the stranger. "If they don't come quietly, we'll drag them down."

The boatman ran up the stairs, calling on the nurse as he went, while the stranger lifted the valise and trunk from the floor and carried them out to the coachman, who was standing by the horse on the street.

"Drive to the North Wall as fast as your horse will go," said the stranger to the man. "Get to the Liverpool steamer in time, and I will give you an extra guinea."

"Begob, but I'll do it, sir," was the reply. Into the house once more sprang the stranger,

and loud rang his voice, as he called on Billy.

"Hurry, hurry, Billy. What's keeping you all up there? Come down at once."

"Murder in Irish, sir," cried the boatman, in an anxious voice, as he stood at the head of the stairs. "Come up here at once. I can't find tale ortidings of the women up here; and I've looked for them in every hole and corner in the house." An exclamation of rage burst from the stranger as he sprang up the stairs.

"What fooling is this?" he cried. "The fools are hiding somewheres. Bring the light out of the bed-room, and we'll search the house. Heavens but they must not play hide and seek with me at such time. We'll miss the steamer if we delay any longer."

Muttering curses and imprecations, the stranger and the boatman went from room to room, up stairs and down, and out into the little yard in the resr; but not a trace of the old nurse and Eileen could they find.

"They've made off, sir," said Billy. "They've made off the back way surely, while I was off for the cab. What will we do now, sir? Will we start without them?"

"Never!" returned the stranger, in a voice that was hoarse with passion. "We must find them. I will never leave Ireland without the girl goes with me. Curse the woman! Where could she have taken the girl?"

"If you'd be said by me for once, sir," interposed the boatman, "you'd leave this house at once, sir. And if you don't want to leave without the girl, go to some other part of the city, and trust to luck to finding her to-morrow. She won't face to her people, I'll go bail, for she is in dread they'd turn their backs to her. We'll find her to-morrow. But, in God's name, leave here at once. I'm certain this place is watched. I know that two fellows were following us as we came here."

The stranger reflected a moment, if it were possible for a man in his position to reflect.

He knew that the dead form of his brother was lying outside in the garden; and he feared to remain another night in the neighborhood.

Billy's words warned him that his enemies might pounce on him at any moment, for he was well aware that Darby and Gerald Fitzgerald were in Dublin, and on the lookout for him and Eileen.

Desperate as he was, he was not so mad as to court danger, when a little precaution might save him from immediate destruction.

"We'll go, then, Billy," he cried. "'Tis best to do so, as we cannot find Eileen now. As you say, she will not dare face her friends. She will seek refuge among strangers, and we will find her to-morrow. In the meantime, let us hurry away to some other part of the city."

"Now yer talking like a sensible man, sir. Come out and get into the cab. As we go along we can get the driver to go where we want."

The lights were extinguished in the cottage, and the two villains left the place.

"Drive away now, like as if the Ould Boy was after ye," cried Billy to the cabman. "The ladies isn't going with us to-night. The sick one isn't well enough to travel."

"I'll have ye there in time, and no mistake," returned the driver.

"Hould on there, ye blackguard!" shouted a loud voice near.

"Merciful Father!" cried Billy, as he sprang into the cab. "That's Darby, me son. Drive on for yer life, man. Don't stop for man or beast. Drive on, Drive on!"

At that moment, Gerald Fitzgerald and Darby sprang at the cab, and the former attempted to seize the horse by the head.

Down went the whip, and away sprang the horse.

Shouts and cries went up from the pursuers as they dashed after the cab.

"We're lost if they catch us, sir," cried Billy, as he listened to his son's wild cries.

The stranger did not utter a word; but his hand was on the revolver, and he remembered that five of the barrels were yet loaded.

That dark stranger was prepared for more bloodshed, if the driver failed to bear him away from his enemies.

CHAPTER XIX.

A CHASE IN THE DARK, AND WHAT THE DARK STRANGER SAW IN THE ROADSIDE INN.

ON and on through the silent streets on the outskirts of Dublin rattled the cab, and after it dashed Gerald Fitzgerald and Darby the Rambler.

"Are they following us yet, Billy?" inquired the stranger, as he held his revolver ready for use. "Can't you make the fellow push on faster?"

"Is they after us yet?" cried the boatman, as he put his head out of the window and addressed the driver.

"Begorra they is," was the driver's reply. "They're tarin' away like mad behind us. Faith, I never thought that two mortal beings could keep up with Tidy here this way. I never saw the likes of how they run."

"Push on yer ould staggeen," yelled Billy. "If they comes up to us ye won't get a penny for yer trouble. Drive on, man, drive on for yer life."

"To the Ould Boy with ye," retorted the cabman. "If ye don't hold yer pate, ye ould fool, I'll stop the horse, and let ye fight it out with the chaps behind. Ould staggeen, indeed! Bad luck to the horse in Dublin can bate him in a fair race. Bad cess to yer impudence, ye country cabbage."

"Hush, Billy," interposed the stranger, as he drew the boatman back to the seat. "Let me speak to the man. We must not have any more rows."

"Tare and ages, sir," cried Billy, in a rage. "I could wollop the life out the blackguard. Is it the likes of him that dares call me a cabbage?"

"Come, come, Billy," continued the stranger, "this is no time for quarrelling. We have enough of it on hand already. Let me speak to the man."

Billy fell back in his seat, grumbling away at the cabman's impertinence, while the stranger, taking his place at the window, addressed the driver as follows:

"My good fellow, I beg of you to push on. Don't pay any attention to this honest man. Get away from the fellows behind us, and I'll give you double what I've already promised you."

"Bedad, sir," replied the cabman, "but I'm doing me best almost. And if I push the horse on any faster, the peelers will nab me. We're getting into the city now, and 'twon't do to go helter-skelter at all."

"Don't drive into the city, then," cried the stranger. "Wheel round into the next street and get out again."

"Don't ye want to catch the steamer at the North Wall?" said the cabman.

"No—no—no," was the impatient reply. "I want to get away from the fools following us. Drive to some quiet tavern outside. Push on anywhere to get rid of the fellows behind."

"If that's yer play, sir, 'tis I that will fix ye, and no mistake. If ye told me that at first, I'd have given them leg-bail afore now. Get up, Tidy."

Down went the whip once more, and away went the cab into a side street.

"Now, Billy," said the stranger, in a low, determined voice, "I don't care to be overtaken by these fellows; but if they do come up with us, we'll have to fight for it. Are you sure 'tis Gerald and Darby?"

"Sure!" returned Billy. "I'd know their voices amongst a million or more. That Darby runs like a hare, for he's used to following the hounds; and Gerald Fitzgerald hasn't his like in the country in a foot race. That accounts for them keeping up with us as they do. But, if they don't raise the hue and cry after us, I think we'll bate them. Bad cess to that staggeen of a horse. A good donkey would go along faster than him."

"I hope we do," muttered the stranger. "I don't want to have any more blood on my hands to-night, if I can help it."

"More blood?" cried Billy. "Why, sir, who are ye after killing at all?"

It will be remembered that Billy was not aware that the stranger had shot the detective.

Nor did the boatman know the secret of the murder of James Dunphy.

The stranger was anxious that his rascally companion should remain in ignorance as regards his crimes; as he feared that such knowledge would lead the cunning villain to be more exorbitant in his demands, and more persistent in controlling their movements.

He also feared treachery on the part of the boatman, for he felt that, should an emergency arise, the unscrupulous rascal would not hesitate to betray him, in order to save himself from punishment.

Thomas McDermott realized, therefore, that he had aroused the curiosity of his companion, and that it would be necessary to allay his suspicions at once, as well as to be on his guard in the future.

"I was thinking of the past, Billy," he replied, in a calm voice. "Off at the mines in California, where we often had to fight for our lives. I killed one desperado there, and I don't want to shed any more blood, if I can help it."

"Faith, sir," said Billy, "if the two fellows after us overtakes this staggeen of a horse, I'm afraid 'tis a hard tussle we'll have with Gerald and Darby. I don't mind the lad much, but Gerald is an able fellow, and a bold one at that; and you may rely on it, that he'll fight—aye, and to the bitter end after what's happened."

"Let him come," muttered the stranger.

"Billy, I am more than desperate to-night—I am furious at the thought of losing Eileen McMahon. When and how could she have escaped? But I'll find her yet, and make her mine, in spite of all the Fitzgeralds in Ireland. As I've sworn before, I'll never leave the country without her."

"I glory in yer spunk, sir," returned Billy. "Only I'm inclined to think yer going too far for a young girl. There's as good fish in the—Holy Moses! what's happened to the old staggeen?" "The horse is down, and so am I," cried the cabman.

The occupants of the conveyance uttered fearful imprecations as they sprang out on the road. "Thunder and lightning!" yelled Billy, as he dragged the man from under the wheels of the vehicle. "What's happened to the ould horse at all? Up again, man, and away with him. He's only stumbled."

"He'll never move again," cried the man, as he attempted to raise his horse from the ground. "Poor Tidy, he's broke his collar bone. Oh, murder in Irish, I'm ruined forever. Bad luck to this for a job. What will I do at all, at all?"

"What will we be doing?" cried Billy, as he peered back into the darkness. "Be the holy farmer, but here they come, pelting along like fury. Let's run for it, sir."

"Hould on there," cried the unfortunate cabman.

"Who's going to pay me for me poor horse? The devil a bit of yer luggage can ye have till ye fixes with me."

"Fool!" cried the stranger, as he drew a revolver. "Don't attempt to detain us, or I'll shoot you as I would a dog. There's enough and more than your horse is worth. Show us the way across the fields here to some quiet tavern. Quick, man, or your life. Our enemies are approaching."

"This way, yer honor," said the cabman, as he sprang over the hedge into a grove. "Follow me, and we'll give them the slip."

The stranger and Billy the Barge were at the cabman's heels in a moment, and all three pushed their way through the dense grove of young trees that lined the road.

"We're not far from where we started, sir," said the cabman, in a low voice. "And over here under the hill is a quiet little place that ye can rest in as long as ye want, and nobody will be the wiser. When them chaps after ye make off, I'll go back and bring yer luggage, and see to the horse; it's a pity he's done for."

"Hang the horse!" cried the stranger; "you see us through this scrape, and I'll buy you another, in addition to what I've already given you. Are they following us yet, Billy?"

"I think they've lost the scent, sir," was Billy's reply.

"Maybe 'twas lucky for us, after all, that the ould horse broke his neck."

"We're not out of the woods yet, Billy," returned the stranger. "Hush, man, hear how they rave with rage at our escaping from them. They've found the horse on the road; and they don't know which way to turn in pursuit of us now."

And Gerald Fitzgerald and Darby the Rambler did fairly howl with rage as they stood on the road gazing at the broken-down horse.

With the tenacity of bloodhounds they had followed the cab, in the firm belief that Eileen McMahon was in the vehicle with the dark stranger.

When the pursuers dashed up to the cottage they had no time to observe whether the poor girl was with the stranger or not; but they felt convinced that he would not fly from the place without her.

Day and night the two faithful friends had sought for the stranger and Billy; and now, when chance had directed them to their hiding-place, they were determined to follow their enemies to the death.

Loud and vengeful, indeed, were the exclamations that fell from their lips as they stood on the dark road beside the useless vehicle, and glared around on all sides in the hope of discovering some trace of the fugitives.

"They can't be far off yet," cried Gerald. "Would to God we had the dog with us. He'd trace them through that wood there."

"Bawl out for Eileen," suggested Darby. "She'll know your voice, she'll answer back if the scoundrels haven't tied her mouth."

Acting on this suggestion Gerald placed his hand to his mouth, and sang out at the top of his voice: "Eileen—Eileen, do you hear me?"

No answer came back to this cry, and loud rang the young man's voice again.

"Eileen McMahon—Eileen Alanna. 'Tis I, Gerald, that calls on you. Answer me, if you are in the sound of my voice. Answer me, Eileen, and I'll fly to your help. Where are you at all?"

As the stranger heard the helpless cries, he broke out into a low, mocking laugh.

"The idiot—the silly fool," he muttered. "There's one thing certain, Billy; Eileen has not met them as yet, wherever she's gone."

"Faith, sir," returned the boatman, "but I'm thinking she can't be far away from here after all. Don't ye mind what the cabby here said—that we were near the very spot where we started from?"

"The cottage I drove ye from a while ago, sir," remarked the guide, "is over that hill just back of us. I know every foot of this place well."

"Bedad! then," suggested Billy, "'twouldn't be a bad notion to steer back there for the night. They'll never dream of looking for us there again. And then, sir, who knows but we'd find the girl there after all. I think that herself and the old woman is about the house yet. She wasn't able to go far away, poor thing, in the sick way she was. What do ye say, sir?"

"Heavens, no!" cried the stranger, and a shudder passed over his frame, as he thought of the form of the brave man lying in the shrubbery. Don't mention it, Billy. I wouldn't face back there to-night for all the world. The girl is not there. Anywhere—anywhere but there, for me. I have a presentiment that if I ever set my foot in that house again, it will be fatal to me. Let's on with this man."

"We haven't far to go now, sir," said the cabman. "Just a step across this meadow, and we're out on the Donnybrook Road. Under the hill there is the tavern."

"They've stopped their bawling up on the road," remarked Billy, as they strode along. "Tis lucky for us the night is dark, for I'd hate to face them bears."

Five minutes more, and the three men were approaching the tavern.

"I wonder who's inside?" the boatman remarked, as they drew near the house. "'Twouldn't do for us to meet any strangers to-night."

"Slip up quietly to the window where the

light is, Billy," advised the stranger, "and see how the coast lies. We can't be too careful."

The stranger and the cabman stood at the end of the house, while Billy, with cautious steps, advanced to the window and peered in.

One moment the boatman stood there; and the stranger and the cabman saw by his agitated manner that something within attracted his attention.

Withdrawing from the window, Billy approached his companions, holding his finger to his mouth in order to command silence.

"For heaven's sake, sir," whispered the boatman, as he drew the stranger aside, "who d'ye think is in there? Come here and see for yerself." The boatman led the man to the window, and the latter peered in.

One glance was sufficient; and then with an oath that was low and deep, withdrew.

Billy the Barge could hear the muttered oaths as he walked by the stranger's side to where the cabman was standing; but in the darkness of the night he could not see the fearful expression that was on the man's face.

"Death and furies!" hissed the man, when they had withdrawn some distance from the house. "Am I to be balked by her, after all? After all I've went through for that girl, am I to be baffled by that mad woman?"

"'Twas her in the boat the other day, with Maurice and Darby, wasn't it sir?" inquired Billy. "Yer won't face in there now, sir?"

"Face the devil!" cried the stranger, in a frantic voice, as he gnashed his teeth with rage. "To think that that fiend of a woman should baffle me. What ill-luck could have driven her in the way of Eileen McMahon; and I thought she was still in prison?"

"The Ould Boy must have brought them together, sir," was Billy's consoling remark.

"Then he'll separate them again," cried the stranger, as he shook his clenched hand at the house. "I'll not rest to-night till Eileen is in my power again."

He was well aware that his wife would not be sitting so calmly in that little parlor, unless she had assurance that others were on his track.

"I understand it now," he muttered. "The nurse and Eileen told her that I was to take the steamer to Liverpool at the North Wall. She has sent word to the police there to head me off; and she expects to see me a prisoner in the morning; but, by heavens I'll disappoint her. I'll fool them all yet."

The desperate man reflected for some time, and then he turned to his companions.

Low and earnest was the conversation carried on between the three men, and strong and clear were the arguments put forth by the boatman and the cabman against the pleadings of the seductive stranger.

But all arguments were powerless as against that wily, persuasive tongue, backed as it was by the world's great tempter—gold!

"'Tis a dangerous job," said the cabman, at length; "but yer offer is a good one, and you say no harm will come to the young girl."

"None," cried the stranger. "She wants to be my wife; but her friends won't have it."

"All right, then," returned the cabman. "There'll be no great harm done."

CHAPTER XX.

THE MAD WIFE DISCOVERS ANOTHER MARK THAT HER HUSBAND HAS MADE.

GERALD FITZGERALD and Darby the Rambler did not know which way to turn in pursuit of the fugitives.

"Where can the villains have gone at all?" queried Gerald, as he looked at the suffering animal. "The driver has made off with them, too."

"He'll be back here again," said Darby. "Bad luck to that nag for breaking his neck. We were gaining on them all the time, and we'd soon be up with them. Let's unhitch the poor beast at all events, and drag the coach off him. They haven't took the luggage with them."

"Ha! ha!" cried Gerald, as he examined the baggage. "Then that driver will be here again after these things, and to see to the horse and cab. We'll stay here awhile Darby, as we

don't know where to turn; and when the fellow comes back we'll pounce on him, and make him show us where they're hiding."

"Faith, but that's a bright notion, Gerald," returned Darby, as he opened the door of the cab. "But d'ye know what I'm just thinking?"

"What's that, Darby?"

"I'm just thinking that they'll be after facing back to the house they started from."

"They wouldn't think of that, Darby," said Gerald. "And if they do, sure we can make the driver tell us, when he comes back here for the things."

"Very well," returned the lad. "We'll wait here, as you say, and see what turns up."

Daylight broke on the watchers, and still the driver did not appear.

"Here's some one coming at last," cried Darby, as he looked out on the road.

"Let's hide in the road here, then," said Gerald; "and if it's the driver after his things, we'll either pounce out on him, or watch where he goes."

Peering out from the grove, Gerald and Darby watched the approach of the new comer.

But they were doomed to disappointment, as the man proved to be a farmer on his way to the city, with a load of vegetables.

As the new-comer drew near the broken-down horse, he pulled up for a short time, muttered some words, shook his head, and drove on. "We've all our waiting for nothing, Darby," muttered Gerald.

"Hould on, hould on!" cried the lad, as he drew Gerald back into the grove. "I see some one tearing along on horseback. Who knows but we'll have better luck now?"

"Who can it be?" said Gerald as he looked anxiously out on the road. "'Tis a woman, Darby; and she's riding for dear life."

"'Tis she, 'tis she!" shouted Darby, as he sprang over the hedge, out on the road. Hurrah! hurrah! We'll have some news of the runaways, now!"

"Julia McDermott, the villain's wife, by all that's holy," exclaimed Gerald.

And the next moment the deserted wife, her face aglow with exercise and excitement, drew up the horse before the anxious watchers.

"Gerald Fitzgerald," she cried, as she stared from one to the other, "what are you doing out here at this time in the morning? Did you see anything of Eileen McMahon? Did you see that wretch, Thomas McDermott?"

Gerald related in as few words as possible, the incidents of the chase on the previous night; and then explained his purpose in awaiting the driver's return.

"Tell me, ma'am," he continued, in most anxious tones, "if you have any news at all? I'm afraid from your troubled face, that more bad fortune has come to us."

"Yes, yes," returned the woman. "Bad fortune has befallen us again. Last night I found Eileen McMahon, and I was sure of capturing that scoundrel we're after. This morning the girl has disappeared most mysteriously, and the wretch has given us the slip. I'm sure that he has kidnapped her again. Oh, the base wretch. Will he ever baffle me in this way? Will I ever be revenged on him for the death of my poor brother?"

"For gracious sake, ma'am," cried Gerald, "tell us how it happened? Where did you find Eileen? Where did you loose her again? Oh, do tell me. I'm almost mad myself to think that the rascal should slip out of my hands."

"We haven't much time to spare," returned the woman, impatiently. "And I want to find a cottage about here where I've been told he was stopping. The place stands by itself on a new road. They may be hiding there now. 'Tis the house that you followed them from last night."

"I know the spot," said Darby. "I'm sure 'tis over the hill there beyond."

"Let's go there at once, then," said the woman. "I will tell you all about Eileen as we go along. I'm glad I met you folks; and I hope we'll get Eileen once more, and to punish the fiend. I only wish I had one more chance to kill him with my own hand."

As the excited woman spoke, she wheeled

the horse about, and started off at a brisk pace, Gerald and Darby running along by her side.

"Tell me, all about Eileen, ma'am," pleaded Gerald. "We'll keep up with you."

"Yes, yes," returned the woman. "I hardly know what I'm saying or doing, I'm that mad at his beating me this way again, just as I was sure of victory."

"Yesterday," she continued, inclining her head towards Gerald, "I was released from prison on the intercession of Inspector Dillon and Detective O'Malley; and I at once started out to your lodgings, where I met Kathleen. She told me that you were out all day looking for Eileen, and that she did not expect you back for some time."

"I then went back to the Castle Yard and saw detective O'Malley again. I don't know what to make of that man. He looks like a noble fellow, but he acts very strangely in this matter."

"However, when I told him that I was anxious to set out myself in quest of the villain, he detailed a detective to accompany me; and we started off together on horseback. Before parting with Mr. O'Malley, he informed me that he had hope of capturing that false husband of mine to-day; and stated the he believed he was hiding somewhere in this neighborhood."

"We rode around here for some time," continued the woman, "making strict inquiries wherever it was possible to do so; but we did not meet with any success."

"At length, we stopped at a small hotel over under that hill to the left; and as my companion insisted that our horses required rest and refreshment, we remained there for some time."

"While waiting impatiently in the parlor of the hotel, I heard some strange voices in the hall outside; and the next moment the landlady entered the room, followed by a young girl and an old woman."

"One glance at the girl, and I knew that Eileen McMahon was before me. She resembles Kathleen so much, you know."

"Gracious goodness," interposed Gerald. "And wasn't the scoundrel with her?"

"No," replied Julia McDermott. "He was not. But don't interrupt again. Let me tell my story as fast as I can."

"When I saw Eileen, and she looking so pale and feeble, I placed her in a seat near the fire, told her that I was her friend, and assured her that she was safe from the wretch who had been persecuting her."

"From the woman who had accompanied her, and who turned out to be her attendant and nurse since she was borne from the yacht, I learned the particulars of her escape from Thomas McDermott's clutches; and this I learned while the dear creature was taking some tea and toast which I had ordered."

"It appears that the villain had made preparations to start for Liverpool on the steamer that left North Wall last night; and that he intended taking Eileen and the old nurse with him."

"At the earnest intercession of the poor, sick girl, the old woman, who is a kind creature at heart, determined to aid her in flying from the house."

"Oh, Darby, Darby," exclaimed Gerald, "why didn't we get there a little sooner?"

"Listen to me," said the woman impatiently.

"Beg your pardon, ma'am," pleaded Gerald, "go on, I'm dying to hear the rest. And there's the cottage we're looking for down below there."

"It must have been just before you came up that Eileen escaped from the wretches. And then I supposed that he made up his mind to go off to England without her, only that he was afraid to face into the city while you were in such close pursuit."

"However that may be, when I learned from the old woman that he intended to sail from Liverpool, I at once dispatched the detective, who was still with me in the hotel, to inform Inspector Dillon and Detective O'Malley what had occurred, and begged of them that Thomas McDermott should be arrested if he attempted to go away by the steamer."

"That much arranged, I sat with Eileen for some time, listening to her story, and assuring her that she would be gladly welcomed back to her old home and her old love, for the poor thing had fears that she would be disgraced on account of the way in which she had left."—"Poor Eileen," muttered Gerald—"As she was feeble and weary," continued the woman, "I sent her to bed as soon as possible, and I made the old woman accompany her, though the old fool was anxious to remain below and drink gin with some fellow, an old acquaintance of hers who called at the place. As it was, I'm afraid she drank too much, for she's so stupid this morning that she can give no account of herself. Well, well, you want to hear the worst; and the worst is this: When I went up to Eileen's room this morning, she had disappeared. There was no trace of her, and I firmly believe, from what you tell me about that wretch, Thomas McDermott, and his getting back to this neighborhood last night, that he kidnapped her, while that drunken fool of a nurse was stupefied with vile gin. Oh, why didn't I sleep in the same room with her? Why did I leave her out of my sight? Woe, woe, to the wretches who would have dared to enter that room while I occupied it." "But Eileen may have stolen away herself," said Gerald: "as you say that she feared to meet her friends, after what happened." "No, No," cried the excited woman. "I calmed her fears on that point. Thomas McDermott, the wretch, has carried her off with him again. But he can't escape, for he's surrounded and watched on all sides. But there's one thing I wanted to tell you. The detective who was with me last night returned to the little hotel this morning, and he assures me that the wretches did not escape by the steamer. He also informed me that Detective O'Malley had not been seen since early last evening, and that it is supposed that he's on the track of the fugitives, as he was never known to fail in reporting at the head office unless away on urgent business." "I don't know what to make of it all," said Gerald, as he shook his head. "Where's the detective now?" "I sent him back to tell the inspector of Eileen's second abduction," was the reply, "so that all the police in the city could hunt the scoundrels down. I came out this way alone to see if I could find any trace of them." "That's the house, ma'am," said Darby, pointing to the cottage where Eileen had been a prisoner. "And be the holy farmer there's some one lying in the bushes under the window. 'Tis a dead man or a drunken man."

In an instant the impetuous woman was on the ground, exclaiming, as she went through the gate and into the little garden, "Follow me. There's been some foul play here. My fiendish husband has left his mark behind him again. Come in, come in." Gerald and Darby followed the excited creature into the garden, with their eyes bent on the still form lying under the window, and their hearts throbbing at the anticipation of the discovery of some fearful crime.

"Lift him out, lift him out gently," cried the woman, as she pushed aside the bushes. "I can't see his face. Is he dead? Does he breathe? Lay him down there." Gerald and Darby hastened to obey this imperative order, and in a moment the body of the man was lying in the little garden near the window. Taking a handkerchief from her pocket, the woman bent down, exclaiming, as she moistened it with the dew from the grass at her side: "We'll wipe away the blood, and see who it is. This is fearful, indeed!"

Then a wild scream broke from the woman, as she sprang to her feet, and gazed intently at the pale face before her while her companions also uttered exclamations of astonishment and horror. "My God! my God!" shrieked the frantic creature, "'tis Detective O'Malley!" At that moment the clatter of horses' hoofs fell on the ears of the horrified spectators of this appalling scene, and Inspector Dillon, followed by three mounted policemen, rode up to the gate.

"What's wrong here?" inquired the officer, as he sprang from the saddle, and approached the group. "What fresh outrage is this?" "Detective O'Malley is dead—brutally murdered," cried the woman. "We found him here a moment since."—"What?" exclaimed the inspector. "O'Malley—my dear friend O'Malley—dead! That can't be. It must not be. Have you felt his pulse? Is there no signs of life? Ride off, Hayes, and bring a surgeon at once. Help, help, man, till we bear him into the house. Break open that door. Get help at once. To think that O'Malley—the best, the noblest fellow in the world—should be struck down this way." As the agitated man gave those hurried orders, he knelt beside the man, tore open his vest and shirt, and placed his hand near the region of the heart; while at the same time he kissed the pale cheeks of his unfortunate friend with all the affection and reverence of a mother bending over her dead child.

"He lives yet," cried the inspector, as his face brightened up with a joyous look. "His heart beats—his noble heart throbs to the touch of my hand. And God knows how willingly I'd give that right limb to save his life now. Quick, but be gentle with the dear fellow. Get him into the house. And then for a battle with death." Gently and slowly they bore the wounded man into the deserted cottage, and then there was hurrying to and fro, as every one present strove to be of some assistance to the inspector.

Julia McDermott followed the men into the cottage, and then she stood gazing, like one spell-bound, at the wounded detective. "Such a noble fellow," she muttered, "to be struck down by that fiend. Oh, when will this end? When will Thomas McDermott meet the punishment he deserves? Who will avenge this last crime?" "Don't speak of punishment or vengeance now," returned the inspector. "Let us try—must save his life. If he dies, then leave vengeance to me." "But the murderer may escape," said the woman. "He will not escape," was the inspector's reply. "I will follow this man's murderer to the end of the earth." "And I'll go with you," cried the woman, as her eyes gleamed with rage. "Hence-

forward and forever, I'll never rest until Thomas McDermott, for I'm sure 'twas he shot Detective O'Malley there, has suffered for his crimes."

"McDermott—McDermott," said the inspector, as he gazed at the unconscious man. "Why this is strange. Ha! there's Hayes with the surgeon. Now, for the struggle between science and death. I pray to God that this brave, good man's life may be spared."

"We'll all join in that prayer," remarked one of the policemen. "Clear the way for the surgeon."

And while the man of science was examining the wound of the prostrate man, Inspector Dillon motioned Julia McDermott, Gerald and Darby into another apartment. Now that his friend was in better hands, he was anxious to learn from the strangers all the particulars of their adventures during the previous evening.

CHAPTER XXI.

HOW THE DARK STRANGER BORE EILEEN AWAY FROM HIS WIFE.

It will scarcely be deemed possible that any human being, after passing through such terrible ordeals as Thomas McDermott, could have the heart, the nerve, to persist in this dark career of crime. It may seem incredible that he should still pursue the poor girl when she had found shelter with the only being on earth that he feared. Hunted as he was by his infuriated wife, who was burning to avenge her own desertion, as well as the murder of her brother; pursued by the friends and relations of the innocent girl; and haunted by the knowledge of his recent terrible crime, one would suppose that his first impulse—his only thought—would be to fly the land. Though surrounded on all sides by dangers that would appal the bravest, this bold man never entertained a thought of leaving Ireland without Eileen McMahon. In all his struggles through life, Thomas McDermott played a winning game—he had never encountered defeat. In the days gone by, his energy and talent had been devoted to the accumulation of wealth; and though often pitted against desperate and daring men, he never once faltered in his career. When he met Julia Dunphy in San Francisco, he determined that she should be his wife, though he was aware that her plain-spoken brother despised him. He fancied that he loved the accomplished creature, but it was only a fancy. If the truth is to be known, he was more anxious to annoy the brother than to make the sister happy. To be sure, Thomas McDermott admired the brilliant woman, and he looked forward with pride and gratification to the time when she would be the brightest ornament in the grand mansion he called his home. But he did not appreciate the noble woman—he was not able to understand her true nature. To be sure, she was exacting—and who will blame her for it. She was proud, and even haughty, in her bearing; but she had a true heart and a loving nature, for all that. Thomas McDermott did not take the trouble, as he was in duty bound, to study the character of this superior woman; he did not glance beyond the surface; he did not look for the womanly graces and winning charms that were hidden beneath that queenly exterior. A few years of domestic misery, and they agreed to separate. The strong, stern man of the world went on his way without a guiding hand to keep him from the path of crime, and he went down into that Shannon valley to court his fate. The deserted wife, her young hopes and bright dreams clouded forever, retired to a secluded home, and there she remained, indifferent as to her husband's whereabouts, until she learned that her fond brother was murdered by the man who had won her hand. When Julia McDermott received the letter from Kathleen McMahon, in which her husband's treachery and baseness were so plainly stated, the proud woman cast aside all the lingering affection of the wife, and set forth as an avenger. When she arrived in Ireland, and heard from Gerald's lips the further confirmation of her husband's designs against the infatuated Eileen, she could not rest a moment until she denounced the wretch to his face, and with her own hand, if necessary, avenge her brother's death. But when, at length, she encountered the dark stranger in that once happy home; and when he, in the presence of Maurice Fitzgerald and the McMahons denounced her as an impostor, her rage knew no bounds. And is it possible that the proud woman could bear such wrong? She hated and despised Thomas McDermott before, and now so terribly incensed was the noble creature, she would willingly barter her soul to be avenged on him. Thomas McDermott knew that his deserted wife would hound him to the death; that she would follow him wherever he would turn for refuge, and that her life would be devoted to his destruction; and yet he did not falter in his purpose. When the hunted man went down into that peaceful valley, his only idea was to escape from the vengeance of the law—to fly from the land where he had killed his wife's brother. In that valley he met Eileen McMahon, and he determined to win her, despite all obstacles. As he had never encountered defeat in his struggles for gold, the bold, desperate man was resolved that the beautiful country girl should be his prize now. It was the grand passion of his life—for he loved the girl passionately, and nothing save death could compel him to surrender her to another.

Therefore, as he stood that night on the road near the inn, realizing fully the danger by which he was surrounded, with blood on his hands, and his infuriated wife within call, he did not falter in his firm resolve.

He would drag Eileen McMahon even from under the sheltering arms of his own vengeful wife. Nor did the desperate, infatuated man for a moment realize that he had lost the love of the unsophisticated country girl—that his selfish baseness had turned her heart from him forever. His natural vanity, nursed by a life of triumph, led him to believe that Eileen once more under the influence of his winning tongue, he would soon win back the love that he gained before.

Standing on that silent road, Thomas McDermott,

with crime-stained soul, never entertained a thought of retracing his steps. His whole mind was absorbed in planning the abduction of Eileen; and he exulted in the hope that he would yet triumph over all opposition, while baffling the wife who was working for his destruction. With this purpose in view, and with unlimited means at his disposal, Thomas McDermott set about the attack with that promptness and daring which characterized all his movements. Billy the Barge was his willing tool, for that scoundrel was in his power, so long as he had gold to pay him.

The cabman was also induced, by an offer of a large sum, to take part in the desperate scheme. This man was at once despatched for another conveyance; while the stranger and Billy remained concealed near the inn. On the return of the cabman, the stranger approached the window once more, and, peering in, he saw that Eileen was about to retire to her sleeping-room. Hastening back to his companions, he addressed the cabman: "Now, my good fellow, is your time to go in. Manage to get the old woman full of gin; find out in which room the girl is to sleep; and, in the meantime, we will watch out there. Don't allow them to suspect anything. And beware of that lady in the parlor." The cabman entered the inn, called for some drink, and managed to get into conversation with the nurse, who was an old acquaintance.

It was an easy matter for this cunning fellow to find out where Eileen was to sleep, and it was not difficult to persuade the old woman to imbibe freely. Returning to the stranger and Billy, the cabman pointed out the window of the room by which it was intended to effect an entrance. The stranger undertook the daring task of taking Eileen from the place; while Billy and the cabman were to remain on the alert outside. Poor Eileen was so weak and weary when she retired to the bed-room that she threw herself on the bed, where she soon fell into a sound slumber. The nurse entered the room soon after, but she was so overcome by the gin, that she flung herself beside the sleeping girl.

An hour after, and Julia McDermott was asleep in the next room. And then the stranger stole, like a thief, into the room where Eileen and the nurse were sleeping. A candle was burning on the mantle-piece; and, by its dim light, the stranger could distinguish the beautiful girl from the old woman. He stood for a few moments at the bedside watching the sleeping girl as he muttered: "'Tis a pity to disturb her. But I cannot help it. She must be mine. 'Tis well I have the chloroform about me." Then the villain drew a small phial from his pocket, saturated his handkerchief with a portion of its contents, and applied it to the girl's mouth and nostrils. The next moment he lifted her in his arms, and bore her towards the window. A rope had been fastened to a hook on the inside of the room; and the powerful man had no difficulty in bearing the senseless form to the ground.

Five minutes later the rope was removed, and the cab was rattling away over the stony road. Eileen McMahon was in the power of the dark stranger again. Thomas McDermott had baffled his vengeful wife once more. "Now," he muttered, as they were borne along, "Now to escape from the country; and then I will laugh at them all."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE WOUNDED DETECTIVE AND THE DESERTED WIFE.

Two weeks have passed away since the night on which the dark stranger turned on his noble brother, and left him lying wounded in the shrubbery outside the window of the little cottage. Maurice Fitzgerald has been released from prison, having clearly proved his innocence of the crime charged against him; and he is now, in company with Darby the Rambler, looking for the dark stranger and Eileen McMahon.

Two weeks, and no trace of the missing girl has been discovered, though the police of Dublin and her devoted friends have sought for her in every nook and corner of the city as well as in the suburbs. Gerald Fitzgerald and Kathleen were compelled to return to that desolate homestead—the former to look after his farm, and the latter to offer consolation to her bereaved parents. During those two weeks Detective O'Malley has battled bravely with death; and now with the assistance of the ablest physicians in Ireland, he has so far recovered as to be able to sit up in bed. The noble fellow will be about again in a few days, to the great joy of all his associates; and to the unbounded delight of two faithful women who had watched over his bedside night and day. Julia McDermott was untiring in her efforts to hunt down her false husband, but her exertions were in vain. The desperate man had so far succeeded in baffling all pursuit, and though the authorities were confident that he had not left Ireland, not the slightest clue could be discovered concerning his hiding place. While Detective O'Malley lay on that bed of pain, Julia McDermott and the head inspector's wife watched over him and tended him faithfully. All day long would Julia roam the suburbs in quest of her husband and Eileen, and at night she would sit by the patient's bedside, watching and praying for his recovery. She knew that this man was wounded by her husband, and she had a firm belief that he would yet be the means of bringing him to justice. But 'tis little she imagined that the high-souled man before her was the brother of her perjured husband. The inspector's wife was anxious for the recovery of the detective as if he had been her own husband. During the years that passed since he had acted such a manly part in keeping the secret of her young life, this woman regarded the wounded man as the noblest being on the face of the earth. Mrs. Dillon would sit for hours at the bedside with Julia McDermott, and while the wounded man was asleep she told her many incidents of her life, and of his devotion and kindness to his fellow being. And the deserted wife evinced so much interest in the detective, that Mrs. Dillon related the story of his early life, but

did not betray his real name. Indeed, the woman did not suspect that he was in any way related to Thomas McDermott, as the name was a common one in Ireland. When the wounded man was able to converse, he sent for the inspector. The two men were closeted together for some time, and when the inspector withdrew from the room, the traces of deep emotion were visible on his stern countenance. The wounded man informed him—as he had more than suspected before—that the fugitive was his own brother. As Detective O'Malley grew stronger and stronger, Julia McDermott became more and more impatient for the hour when he could set out in quest of her husband. In all conversations she had with the detective on the subject, she saw that he evinced a disposition to avoid speaking of Thomas McDermott. The vengeful woman expected to find in him an enthusiastic assistant, especially as he did not hesitate to assert that the stranger had attempted his life. When Detective O'Malley first saw his brother's wife, and heard of the treachery of his brother, the first question that suggested itself in his mind was: "How could any man be so base as to dream of deserting this glorious creature?" The more he saw of the deserted wife, the more he was attracted to her; for in all things, save her inveterate hate for her husband, she was a high-souled, kind and ever gentle woman. "My God!" the wounded man would mutter, as he watched the woman moving about the sick room, "what a treasure such a creature would be to one like me. Why did chance not throw her in my way ere she ever met that fiend of a brother?" And as day after day passed away and he was able to converse more freely with the talented creature, he felt that the world would be a paradise indeed if fate had given him such a partner through life.

About four days after the head inspector had left the detective's bedside, Julia McDermott made a strange appeal to him to assist her in her mission. It was night, and she had been reading at his bedside. The book was now lying on the table, and Julia McDermott was alone with the wounded man. She saw that he was growing stronger each day, and as all others had failed in hunting down the fugitive, she was counting the hours until this clever man would start out on the trail.

"You will be able to go out in a few days, Mr. O'Malley," she said, "and then I hope you will be able to find this wretch. I know that you must be anxious to see him punished. And we have all waited and watched so patiently for your recovery." "And was it for this only that you have watched and waited?" inquired the detective.

"Oh, no," cried the woman, eagerly. "Don't imagine that we were not all concerned for your own sake. I was doubly interested, inasmuch as it was while engaged on my business that the wretch attempted your life. We now look to you to avenge your own sufferings and mine." "I am afraid then, ma'am," was the cold reply, "that you will look in vain."

"How is that?" inquired the anxious woman. "Do you deem it impossible to capture—to destroy—this man?" "The man will be captured," replied O'Malley; "but I will have no part in it. I am no longer in the service. My resignation is already in the hands of the inspector." "Your resignation is in the hands of the inspector!" exclaimed the woman, as she sprang from the chair and glared at the detective. "Do you mean to say that you will leave your work unfinished—that you will give up the pursuit of this wretch who has so far baffled them all? Mr. O'Malley, you must be mad, to think of such a thing. Why you, of all men in the world, should be anxious to crush this man. Surely, you are not in earnest."

As the woman broke forth into this impassioned appeal, the wounded man rested his head on his hand and gazed at her with wondering eyes, while his heart beat with a thousand wild emotions. He knew that it was a crime to look upon this glorious creature with eyes of love; and nobly had he struggled to crush—to stifle the emotions that crowded on him. The strong man never knew what it was to love before, for the gentler feelings of his nature were lying dormant within him; and his early life had banished all romance from his mind. When he first encountered Julia McDermott, all the sympathies of his chivalrous nature were aroused in her behalf, as well as in the behalf of Eileen McMahon; and when it dawned on him that he was becoming attached to the charming woman, his first impulse was to fly from her society—never to look on her face again. As Detective O'Malley stood before his wretched brother on that Sunday night, when he registered a sacred vow that he would pursue him to the death if he broke his oath, the determined man was resolved on keeping his promise.

He fondly hoped that his brother would give up Eileen McMahon and leave Ireland; and his wife would follow him. Yet he doubted the sincerity of the treacherous brother; and that doubt led him back to the cottage. When he was restored to consciousness, his first thoughts were of vengeance, and if he had been capable of action at the time, he would have pursued his brother to the grave. Then the deserted wife came to watch over him; and to incite him against his assailant; yet, strange to relate, her words had the effect of softening the feelings within him.

She came, with her bewitching smile, her sweet tongue, and her graceful form, and the wounded man could not fly from the enchantress. "Oh, God!" he would cry, in his agony. "If that false brother were dead, I might hope to win this glorious creature. But, no—no, such a union is debarred by church and state; and I must not dream of it. The moment I am able to crawl from this bed, I will leave Ireland forever, and strive to banish her from my memory. With this purpose in his mind, the noble man sent for the head inspector, confided to him the fact that the fugitive was his brother, begged of him to release him from the unwelcome duty of hunting him down, and declared his intention of leaving Ireland as soon as possible. The

stern inspector heard his story, and he was deeply affected, but he begged of O'Malley that he would consider the matter more fully, while at the same time he assured him that every exertion would be made to secure the criminal and release the unfortunate girl. "I do not want you to leave us, O'Malley," he said. "We cannot afford to lose you at this time. That affair of the banker, Mr. Parker, is not cleared up yet. I want you to work it up for me." The wounded man shook his head, and did not reply. It was evident that he had lost all interest in his profession—his ambition was dead. And now the detective is lying on that bed, his head resting on his hand, his eyes fixed on the excited woman before him, and his whole soul filled with a thousand wild, conflicting emotions. The woman he adored has offered him her heart and hand as a prize for the destruction of his treacherous brother.

Was mortal ever so sorely tempted? Could the strong man refuse the paradise that was opened to him?

"Julia McDermott," he cried, as he seized her hand and pressed it to his lips, "would to God that we had met years ago—before that fiend ever crossed your path. Though I would lay down my life for you at this moment, I will not insult you by taking you at your word, and I could not if I would. The man you ask me to destroy was my playmate in childhood, we knelt at the same knee. Julia, Julia, the wretch is my brother."

"Your brother," she exclaimed, as she started back in amazement. "Your brother! That vile wretch. Oh, no—no—no. It cannot be. There must be some mistake. Why, your name is O'Malley." "There is no mistake, no doubt about it, my dear sister-in-law, as I may call you," returned the agitated man. "Give me your hand again, and sit down on the chair, while I tell you briefly some of the incidents of my unhappy life." "Your brother," muttered Julia, as she placed her hand on that of the sick man. "Oh, I cannot believe it. It does not seem possible at all." "Listen to me, Julia," replied the detective. "Listen to me as calmly as you can. When you hear my story, you will know that your false husband is my only brother."

"Why he told me that his only brother died in Australia some years ago," interrupted the woman;

"So I caused it to be reported: and he believed it. But listen if you please."

And then the man told his story, in simple words, and with an evident reluctance to claim for himself any credit for his noble conduct. He told of his meeting with her husband on that Sunday night in the silent street, when he swore by the mother that bore them that he would punish them if he did not keep his pledge. And, oh, how the woman's eyes flashed with rage and indignation as she listened to the recital. "Oh, the fiend," she cried. "And then, after all this, he attempted to take your life. Go on, go on." Then he told her of his last meeting of the dastard at the cottage, and of the attempt at assassination. "And now, Julia," he continued, "You have heard all. What can I do—what should I do? Bad as this man is I cannot hound him to death."

"Would you perjure your own soul?" cried the angry woman, as she pressed the hand of the wounded man. "You swore by the mother who bore you, that you would hunt this wretch down, and you must keep your oath. Were he your brother a thousand times over, he is a perjured wretch, a murderer, false to me, false to every one. Oh, my brave, my noble champion, you must not desert me now. We must follow this villain together. If you desert me I will destroy my life." "I will never desert you, Julia," exclaimed the man, as he looked into her beaming eyes. "God forgive me, but I love you better than life—than honor—more than all the world beside, for I am willing to do your bidding now, even to the taking of my own brother's life. Forgive me for speaking in this way; but man was never so troubled as I am." As the detective gave vent to his pent-up feelings, he burst into tears.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LAST LINK IS BROKEN.

WHILE Julia McDermott and the wounded detective were conversing in the sick room two eyes were glaring on them. Crouched on the piazza outside the open window was the form of a man. It was the dark stranger. Thomas McDermott was disguised in the same manner as on the night when he first encountered his brother in the deserted street. The desperate, daring man had ventured to approach the house where his brother was lying, but with what purpose he could scarcely define. And yet it was not mere curiosity that had impelled him to take this step. He knew that his wife was a constant attendant on the sick room, and he was anxious to learn, if possible, how much she had influenced him. Though he had attempted to murder the noble officer, the wretched man felt that his brother would not hound him to death, unless stimulated to action by some extraordinary impulse. It was not the first time that the stranger had paid a secret visit to the house, for he was crouching on that piazza on the very night when the detective and the inspector held the important interview, and he then learned that, notwithstanding his solemn oath, the devoted brother declined to pursue him. The stranger could have fled from Dublin ere this; but he found it impossible, owing to circumstances hereafter explained, to bear Eileen McMahon with him. Depraved and desperate as he was, he could not but feel a pang of remorse when he reflected on the more than generous conduct of his brother. The man was about to throw up his position, and fly the land, rather than hunt down the brother who had tempted his life. Yet the stranger feared his wife—he dreaded her influence over his brother. Crouching there that night, he learned that the self-sacrificing man was devotedly attached to the wife he had deserted; and he could see that Julia was not insensible to the brave man's devotion. His heart beat wildly as he listened to her appeal calling on the detective to hunt

down the outlawed brother. "The fiend of hatred," he muttered, as he glared in at the weeping man and woman. "She will prevail on him to work out her revenge. She wishes me dead now, more than ever, that she may marry him. He refuses to raise his hand against me, though I attempted to kill him; but my wife, who should be the last to turn on me, urges him on. Ha—what are they saying now." And he bent forward to catch the words which fell from his brother's lips. "Julia, Julia," muttered the detective, "I am sorely beset, and I know not what to do. This false man deserves the worst of deaths, but I cannot raise my hand against him. Oh, tis so unnatural, that my soul revolts at the thought of it. Let other hands be raised against him, as they will—for he cannot escape—but I cannot strike him. I would die for you willingly; but, oh, do not ask me to proceed in this affair."

"Richard McDermott," responded the woman, in a calm voice, while her eyes were fixed on the man. "I told you before that I would be your willing slave for life, if you would destroy this man."

"You did not know that he was my brother, then," interposed the detective. "I know it now," continued Julia. "And again I call on you, by all that you hold dear on earth, to punish this miscreant. It is not necessary that you should kill him with your own hands. Hunt him down, and then hand him over to the judges. Do this, Richard McDermott, and I will give you my hand and love. In another land we can live in peace and happiness. Oh, Richard, Richard, I did not dream of love again; but will love you with all my heart and soul, if I could only feel that I was free, that this vile wretch was dead." "Julia, Julia," cried the man in agonized tones. "I beg of you not to tempt me in this way; I am but human, and"—

"She's a fiend!" rang out the hoarse voice of the dark stranger.

The woman sprang from the chair exclaiming: "My God! There's the villain now."

The next moment the report of a pistol rang out on the night air. Julia McDermott raised her hand to her breast, uttered a cry of pain and fell to the floor, the blood streaming from a wound in her side. A scornful laugh burst from the stranger as he stood by the window. "Now brother of mine, do your worst," he cried. "You will never call that virago your wife."

And the next moment the dark stranger had disappeared from the window. The detective was so horrified at what he had witnessed that he was unable for some moments to speak or move. He turned his gaze on the fallen woman, and a cry of anguish burst from his lips, as he saw the life-blood, as he feared flowing from her side. Springing from the bed, and shouting loudly for assistance the while, he bent over the wounded creature and lifted her in his arms. "Julia, Julia," he cried in a voice that was hoarse with anger and agony, "are you dead? Oh, the cruel treacherous scoundrel." Bending his head till it touched the woman's face, he kissed her lips, murmuring the while; "My poor, deserted, loving creature. And must you die in this way, and by his hand. The villain has broken the last link that bound me to him. May God never show me mercy if I show it to that false brother hereafter."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE DARK STRANGER DISCOVERED THAT HIS BROTHER IS IN EARNEST AND ANOTHER SURPRISE.

MUTTERING some words of satisfaction, Thomas McDermott stole away from the house where he had left his wife weltering in her blood. Through all his career of crime, the dark stranger had never committed a deed that he so little regretted. So far from feeling any remorse at all, he congratulated himself on having slain the woman whom he had once honored—whom he had looked upon with eyes of love. "I loved Julia once," he muttered, as he strode along in his disguise. "But I have learned to hate her, and I'm glad she's dead. She has followed me like a bloodhound, and she would follow me to the bitter end."

At that moment Maurice Fitzgerald and Darby the Rambler passed along the sidewalk close to the dark stranger. The latter recognized them at once; and he saw that his former friend was much changed from the day on which he first met him in the village of Dunmore. "Maurice, the fool, takes the loss of his girl hard," he muttered in a low chuckle. "What a goose he is, not to go home and tend to his farm. He'll never see Eileen again."

The stranger walked on a short distance, and then looked back at his enemies, muttering: "This disguise is perfect. I could travel on any car, or pass into any steamboat with it. How easy it would be for me to escape from the country, if I could only take Eileen with me. Ha! Maurice and that fool are watching me now. Is it possible that they can suspect me in this make-up?"

As the man spoke in a low tone, he stopped to look in at a shop window. While thus engaged he could keep his eye on Maurice and his companion; and he saw that they had wheeled around and were retracing their steps toward where he was standing.

"They're watching me," thought Thomas McDermott; "and I had better get away from this public street."

The stranger moved on down the street at an easy gait, while he assumed an air of indifference that was not in keeping with his feelings at the time. "Surely, Darby," muttered Maurice Fitzgerald, as he watched the bent figure before him, "that can't be the scoundrel. Why 'tis an old gentleman. We'd be only getting into a hobble if we were to say anything to him."

"Maybe ye're right, Maurice," returned Darby, in the same low key. "But, begorra, from the peep I got of him the night him and dad made off in the coach, I'd most take me oath he had a wig on like that could fellow. 'Twon't do any harm to keep on his scent, at all events."

"We can do that easy enough, Darby, and without his suspecting anything either. If I thought that it was the villain, I'd pin him to the ground in less than two minutes."

"Wait and see, Maurice," said Darby. 'Tis better to be sure than sorry. Our time is our own. Let's after him till we run him to his cover."

With this purpose in view the two friends kept on the track of the disguised man. The stranger seemed to be aware of their object, and he made up his mind to lead them on a long chase. Up one side of the street and down the other, he tramped for over half an hour, and still Maurice and his companion followed at a respectful distance. While thus engaged in watching the stranger, the two countrymen did not observe a side-car, moving along quietly, as if the driver was waiting for a passenger. The side car would disappear for a time, and then it would reappear again near where the stranger was strolling along. At length Thomas McDermott grew impatient under the surveillance, and he was about to jump on the car with the intention of ordering the driver to move away rapidly, when he felt a hand on his shoulder, while a rough, stern voice sounded in his ear:

"You're my prisoner."

To spring around suddenly and confront the intruder was the stranger's first movement. "No resistance," was the next exclamation of the tall stout man that stood before him. "You must come along with me."

"What means this outrage?" cried the disguised man, in an indignant tone. "Who are you, and why do you thus assail me?"

"I am a detective," was the reply, "and I arrest you on the order of my superior."

"I demand to know on what charge you arrest me," said Thomas McDermott. "On the charge of murdering Mr. Parker, the banker," was the stern reply.

"Murdering Mr. Parker!" exclaimed the disguised man, as he started back in astonishment. "Who makes this silly charge against me?"

"Detective O'Malley," was the calm reply. "Come along with me, and no nonsense, or I will use this on you at once. Here, let me clap the bracelets on you."

As the man spoke, he held a pair of handcuffs in one hand, while with the other a revolver was presented at the face of the dark stranger.

"I don't wish to make any fuss," was the meek rejoinder, as the disguised man held up his hands for the bracelets. "But there's not the least necessity for this indignity. I will go with you quietly." If the officer had looked into the stranger's eyes as he spoke, he would have seen a gleam therein that betokened danger. But the man was completely thrown off his guard by the subdued and helpless manner of his prisoner, and he did not anticipate the slightest resistance. Placing the revolver in his pocket, the man was about to put the handcuffs on the disguised stranger, when the latter jerked them from his grasp, and then, with another lightning-like movement, flung them full in the face of the astonished officer. Down went the detective as if struck with a sledge-hammer, and then, with a bound that told of youth and activity, the dark stranger sprang on the side-car as it passed rapidly along the street. "Drive on, drive on," he said, addressing the driver in low, clear tones, "'Tis life and death for it now."

"Richard has now turned on me in earnest," he muttered, as they drove along. "And now 'twill be a terrible struggle between us." Then he thought of the wife whose life was made desolate by his treachery, while he was now gloating over her untimely death. "She's the cause of all this trouble," he muttered, "and she deserves her fate. If it wasn't for her devilish temper I would have never put my foot in Ireland again. I would not have met her hot-headed brother. I would not have been thrown in the way of Eileen McMahon as I was." Then he thought of the terrible charge his brother had made against him—that of murdering the old banker, Mr. Parker—and he shuddered at the hideous vision of the gallows appeared before him. "How could Richard have traced that deed to me?" thought the guilty man. "I did not dream that mortal would ever suspect me. By the great God, but I believe that it was Julia put him on the track. She was there on that same day. Curse—eternally curse her—for a crazy vengeful fool. I'm only sorry that I didn't kill her before." As the side-car neared its destination, the stranger's thoughts were turned to the unfortunate girl who was still in his power. "And must I fly without Eileen, after all?" he thought. "I can easily escape them if I go alone, for there's not an officer in Ireland that I cannot baffle, except Richard, and he won't be able to stir for some days. Must I leave Eileen, a ter all I have gone through for her sake, after all the crime I have committed that I might make her my own? By heavens, I won't think of such a thing. I'll win her yet, and escape the country with her, if that scoundrel, Billy the Barge, will remain faithful. We have the yacht yet. But here we are at the old farm-house, and now to arrange matters with Billy. We must be off as soon as possible." While these thoughts were passing through the stranger's mind, the side-car was proceeding along a narrow lane towards a dilapidated old farm-house in the vicinity of Donnybrook. When they reached the yard, the stranger sprang to the ground, and ran to the door. The next moment he was standing in the kitchen before a middle-aged woman. "Where's Billy?" he cried, impatiently. "He's lying up stairs, sir, with a ball in his leg," was the reply.

"A ball in his leg!" exclaimed the stranger. "Has the clumsy fool shot himself with that revolver I gave him? The fiends take him! There's more luck, and at such a time." "No, indeed, sir," returned the woman. "He didn't shoot himself at all." "Who, in the fiend's name, did it, then?" cried the stranger, excitedly. "Speak, woman. Do you want to drive me mad with your staring?" "The girl did it, sir," was the woman's reply, as she drew back before the fierce countenance of the excited stranger. "The girl! What—Eileen, do you mean? Are you mad, woman?" "Faith, I'm not far from it, sir," faltered the woman: "for God knows I've seen enough to-night to drive anyone distracted. But, I tell you, sir, that the girl shot him with the pistol, and then she made off with herself like a wild person."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE WILD RAVINGS AND ACTIONS OF EILEEN ALANNA.

WHEN Thomas McDermott and his companions plotted the abduction of Eileen McMahon from the inn where she had found protection with Julia McDermott, they resolved to convey her to the old farm-house not far from Donnybrook.

It was a lonely place, hidden away in a clump of stately elms, and inhabited only by the cabman and his wife.

For days and nights she raved wildly about her old home and her old friends. At times, she would call on her mother and father, and Kathleen and Maurice, to come and save her from the wretch who had stolen her away.

Then, again, the poor creature would seem to forget all her sorrow, and fancy that she was living her old life once more. "Oh, Kathleen," she would exclaim, "Don't you hear the howling of the storm. Are the things nearly stowed away. I don't believe the boys will venture here such a night as this:

"Oh, my Maggie was winsome, my Maggie was fair, And her voice rang as clear as the lark's in the air; Till a stranger came down in our valley one day, Then the light in my darling's eye faded away."

Oh, alanna machree, alanna machree, My old heart is aching and breaking for thee."

Then she would spring up in the bed, her eyes flashing with unnatural fire, exclaiming: "May God's curse forever light on the stranger that came down that night into our happy valley. Oh, Maurice, Maurice, the night is dark now, and the sorrow is upon us, but everything will be bright at the dawning of the day. Father will kill the dark stranger; but his Alanna will not be sleeping in the old churchyard."

Thus, day after day went by, and poor Eileen raved of her home, of her happy days, and of her present great sorrow. Day after day the stranger and the woman of the house watched her with anxious hearts.

Thomas McDermott listened to her wild ravings, and he heard the maledictions that were poured forth on him incessantly, yet he did not falter in his determination.

He told the woman that the girl had fled with him from her home, and that he would make her his wife as soon as she recovered her strength and reason. "The poor thing is overcome by the excitement of leaving her home," he would say. "She had a trying time there, because they were forcing her to marry a rich old fellow in the neighborhood. She'll be all right again before long, and then you'll see how she'll cling to me and confide in me. Wait till her strength and reason is restored."

Eileen did recover her strength after a time, but her reason did not seem to come back again, though she grew less violent in her ravings and denunciations. The woman saw that the girl could not tolerate the stranger in her presence; that she shrank from his approach with the greatest abhorrence; and she thought that they were strange runaway lovers, indeed. Yet she did not mention her suspicions to the man, as her husband had cautioned her against saying anything that might annoy the patron who had paid them so well for their services and their secrecy. While the wild fits were on Eileen, Thomas McDermott seldom ever left the house; but when he saw that she was growing calmer, he often ventured into the city, in order to make arrangements for his projected escape from the country. When he ventured away from the farm-house, Billy the Barge was left behind to watch Eileen, and to guard against the approach of strangers. The stranger did not dream that the apparently helpless girl would make an attempt to escape from the place, much less that she would offer violence to those who had her in charge. Great was his astonishment, indignation and rage, on returning this night, and learning that the girl had disappeared, while his unscrupulous companion had received a wound which disabled him for the time. With beating heart and glaring eyes, the stranger rushed into the room where the wounded man was lying on the rude bed. "Gracious heavens, Billy!" he cried, as he stared at the suffering wretch. "What is this I hear? Is it possible that you have let Eileen escape? How did it happen, for God's sake? Oh, you blundering, cowardly fool, what were you about?"

The wounded man looked up at the excited stranger for a moment ere he replied to this torrent of interrogatories and abuse. "Why don't you answer me?" continued the stranger. "Do you hear me? or has that bullet in your leg deprived you of the use of your tongue?" "I hear you very well, sir," replied Billy, with a loud groan. "But I'm ruined entirely, so I am. Oh, who'd ever think she'd turn on me in this way, and give me my death-wound? For God's sake, sir, bring the doctor and the priest to me bedside this minnit. I know I can't last long."

Don't be a fool, man. Let me see the wound. Where did she hit you? Oh, heavens! to think that I should lose her now, after all I have gone through for her sake. Let us see where she hit you, man. Quick! I must be away in search of her." "She hit me here in the calf of the leg. I know I'll be dead afore morning. The Lord have mercy on me wicked sowl!" Oh, bad luck to the pain, for 'tis killing me fast. Oh, I'm a gone man!" And the wounded man burst out into a violent fit of crying and sobbing. "Shut up, you calf!" cried the stranger. "Be a man, and let me examine the wound." As Thomas McDermott spoke, he bent down and withdrew the clothes from the sufferer's legs. A hurried examination of the wound convinced him that the boatman was more frightened than hurt. "Pshaw!" he cried, as he flung the clothes back and sprang up from the bedside. "You're the greatest coward I ever met. 'Tis a mere graze. The ball has only taken away a little of the flesh. 'Tisn't enough to frighten a child." "Do you tell me so, sir?" Oh, you're only joking now, aint you?" "Nonsense, man!" returned the stranger, in a stern voice. "Do you think that I'm in a mood for joking to-night? No, no; I was never

more in earnest in my life. 'Tis nothing but a scratch."

"And I won't bleed to death afore morning, sir?" inquired the wretch. "There's no danger that me leg will have to be cut off?" "Don't drive me mad, man. I tell you that it amounts to little nothing. Quick, man, and tell me how it happened! Give me some idea to guide me in my search for Eileen. Did she appear to be out of her mind? Is there any danger that she will tell any one where we are concealed?"

"She was as mad as a March hare, sir," was Billy's reply. "Oh, sir, she was furious altogether. 'Twould make your hair stand on an end to hear and see what she said and done. But as you say I'm out of danger, I'll tell you all about it."

"Be quick about it, then," cried the stranger, impatiently. "I must away from here at once. Go on, man, go on just as fast as your tongue will rattle."

"Well, sir, you see," commenced Billy, "when you went away to-day, it ran in me head that something would happen afore long; and I kept me eye on the girl as well as I could, and another outside the house to see that no one would come on us unnoticed."

"'Twas a good bit after dusk, sir, while I was out in the yard, that I heard a terrible hillabaloo inside here; and, when I ran in, there was the colleen, with all her things on, facing the woman of the house, and swearing she'd go home in spite of her."

"I tried to pacify her as well as I could; but she turned on me like a tiger; and the devil such a raking did mortal man ever get before."

"Well, well," interrupted the stranger; "why didn't you force her back to her room, and lock the door on her at once?"

"That's what we tried to do, sir," continued Billy. "The woman and I tried our best to do it, without being too rough with her. But, Lord, sir, we couldn't handle her at all."

"A nice pair, indeed," sneered the stranger. "Couldn't manage a sick girl between you. But go on, man."

"Well, sir, at last, when I saw she was wild intirely, I made up my mind to take her up bodily; and I was making for her to take her in my arms, when she out with the pistol and let fly at me, and I fell on the floor mortally wounded, as I thought."

"There, ye villain," she cried, as she stood over me, and pointing the pistol at my head, 'I've a good mind to put another bullet through your brain. Oh, if that other wretch was only here now, I'd punish him for his treacherous, vile conduct."

"What could I do, sir—with her holding that pistol to me head, and looking at the fire blazing from her eyes—but cry for mercy. I was in mortal dread that 'twould go off every second."

"What was the woman about?" inquired the stranger, in passionate tones. "Oh, fools, fools—to allow a mad, weak girl to bully and baffle you in that way. Where did she get the pistol?"

"That's more than I can say for certain, sir; but I dare say that I forgot it after me on the table there, and she stole into the room and got it."

"You idiot," cried Thomas McDermott, "you deserve to be shot. But, go on. Did the woman make no attempt to stop her?"

"That's me thanks for all I done and suffered for the black devil. He wishes to God I was mortally wounded, indeed. And that's all the pity he has for me. Wait awhile me fine gentleman, and see if I dont make up for this yet, and make a fine penny out of you in the bargain."

Without speaking a word to the cabman or his wife, the stranger rushed out into the yard, and away he ran down the narrow lane.

"Eileen, Eileen," he cried, "where have you gone to? My God! she will perish on the roadside this dark night. How will I find her? Where will I look for her? Fiends and furies, why did they let her escape?"

While Thomas McDermott was running through the lane, and calling on Eileen, Maurice Fitzgerald was sitting at the bedside of Detective O'Malley.

The young man was reciting what he had witnessed of the escape of the dark stranger on Grafton Street, and bemoaning his ill-fortune in not pouncing on his enemy in time.

"Never mind, Maurice," said the wounded man, "I'll be up and about again in a few days; and I promise you that I will punish that scoundrel and save the young girl, too."

In the next room lay Julia McDermott, conscious of the fact that the surgeons entertained but little hope of her recovery, yet hoping and praying that her life would be spared, if it but last long enough to witness the downfall of her wretched husband.

And away in that Shannon valley Eileen's parents and sister were offering up prayers to God for the return of the lost one.

CHAPTER XXV.

DETECTIVE O'MALLEY'S THEORY OF THE MURDER OF THE OLD BANKER.

THREE days more have passed away since the night on which Julia McDermott was stricken down by her false husband.

Detective O'Malley has, to a certain extent, recovered his health and strength; and he is now prepared to set out in quest of the man whom he has sworn to destroy.

He is now seated in the head inspector's office, at the Castle yard, and he is engaged in an earnest conversation with his superior.

"She will recover her bodily health, O'Malley," said Mr. Dillon, "but Dr. Butcher fears that her brain has received a severe shock; he's afraid that it will be a long time ere she is herself again."

"God help her," rejoined the detective, with a deep sigh. "She has suffered enough to drive a dozen

women mad, and no mistake. Oh, but that rascally brother of mine deserves to die a thousand deaths!"

"By the way, O'Malley," said Mr. Dillon, "you have not yet told me how you discovered that he was implicated in the Parker affair."

"Implicated!" returned O'Malley. "Why, sir, he had all to do with it."

"How did you find it out?"

"I will tell you, sir," continued the detective, "while we are waiting for that woman and the driver. I hope they'll have no trouble in finding them."

"They should be here soon now," said the inspector. "We ought to have taken them up before now. 'Tis very strange we did not think of it before."

"'Twas all my fault," said the detective. "God forgive me—but I wanted to save the wretch from the gallows. Oh, but it was terrible to think that I should have to be instrumental in destroying my own brother, bad as he was. I committed a great crime, and I have suffered for it."

"Well, well, O'Malley," said the inspector, "there's no use in regretting the past now. It cannot be recalled. And we have only to look to the future. Let me hear about this Parker affair."

"Well, Mr. Dillon," resumed O'Malley, "you remember the day you called me in here—the day I first met poor Julia—to consult about this Shannon affair. You will also remember that Mr. Parker was murdered on the night, or evening, before."

"I had then made up my mind that the man had not been killed for his money; and I was puzzled to make out what other motive could have incited the murder—as it was not known that the banker had an enemy in the world."

"As I entered this office that day the first words that fell on my ear were those uttered by Julia, as she denounced her husband, Thomas McDermott."

"You noticed how very much agitated I was at the time, and afterwards, when I heard the story of my brother's rascality. You will now understand my feelings, when I tell you it at once flashed on my mind that Thomas McDermott had killed the banker."

"What reason had you for coming to that conclusion?" inquired the inspector.

"I will tell you," continued the detective. "In my investigations that morning I discovered that my brother had a large sum of money deposited with Mr. Parker. That money had been drawn the day previous—or on the evening of the murder—as I saw by an entry in the banker's account book. It was the last entry made by the murdered man."

"On the desk in his office I also found a memorandum of cash paid on a bill of exchange drawn in favor of Julia McDermott."

"You will now readily perceive that the coincidence was rather striking; and that I had gained a sufficient clue wherewith to trace the murderer, though I confess that, at the time, I could not account for the motive that actuated him."

"When I entered this office that day, and heard of the doings of my brother—when I heard of the base manner in which he had treated his wife and Eileen McMahon, I became fully convinced that he was capable of committing murder, and further inquiry convinced me that the theory which I had suddenly formed was the correct one."

"What theory was that, O'Malley? I don't quite understand you yet," interposed the inspector.

"Listen a moment, sir, and I will make it all clear to you. You know that Mr. Parker had the reputation of being an honorable, high-toned gentleman, and that he would be very likely to denounce, in the strongest terms possible, the man who would be guilty of any wrong-doing."

"That was his character, O'Malley."

"Well, sir, Julia McDermott knew that Mr. Parker held a large sum of money belonging to her husband, nothing was more natural than that she should call on him, and tell him of her husband's doings—as she did the first day that she came to Dublin."

"I understand better now, O'Malley. Go on," said the inspector.

"So you see, sir," resumed the detective, "my theory of the murder was this: That brother of mine went to Mr. Parker to draw his money on the very day that he was cast ashore at Kingston. The honest old banker upbraided him for his rascally treachery; and threatened, I suppose, to set the police on his track."

"We can easily imagine that the hunted man grew very indignant with the banker; and that he also grew desperate at the thought that he would be frustrated in his designs against Eileen McMahon."

"I see—I see," cried the inspector, "your theory was a sound one. Go on."

"Then, while enraged at the honest man's denunciations, and fearing exposure and disgrace through the information that he would give the police, the wretched villain stabbed his victim, and fled silently from the place, taking his money with him."

"That's my theory of the murder, sir. And I think it is the correct one; for when I accused my brother of the crime, on the night he shot me, he did not deny it, but appeared to be terribly surprised that I should have discovered his secret."

"Yes, yes," muttered the inspector. "And the wife, did you ever speak to her about it?"

"Yes," replied O'Malley, "I asked her if she did not call on Mr. Parker; and she admitted that she did; and that the old gentleman was very much incensed against her husband on hearing of his doings. Moreover, I think she knew more about the affair than she cared, for some unaccountable reason, to admit. She seemed more anxious to have him taken on the charge of killing her brother."

"That's rather strange," remarked the inspector. "If she was so very anxious to avenge her brother's death, the surer way would be to bring the murder of Mr. Parker home to him, as it is very doubtful if we can

hang him on the other charge, inasmuch as her brother struck the first blow. I don't comprehend her at all."

"Neither do I, sir," said O'Malley. "But you must remember that I do not have much to say to her on the subject, as I had then made up my mind to give the villain a chance for his life, if he would only make some amends for his rascality. The treacherous rascal! My blood boils when I think how he treated me afterwards; and to think that he should attempt to kill the beautiful creature that he had deserted. But he'll not escape from me this time."

"Here comes Hayes with the woman, O'Malley," said the inspector. "You had better deal with her, and the hackman, also."

The next moment the officer entered the room, leading Norah Brady, the old nurse, by the arm.

"Aha, my good woman," said detective O'Malley, in a quiet voice. "I want to have a few words with you. Sit down there."

"Sure, sir, commenced the nurse, "what did I ever do at all, that they'd be dragging me here like a robber for? The Lord preserve us;"

"Don't be troubled, my good woman," returned O'Malley. "We only want to ask you a few questions, and then we will let you go home at once. Hayes, is that hackman outside?"

"He is, sir," was the reply.

"Now, my good woman," continued O'Malley, as he turned to the nurse, "you saw that man in the room outside. Do you know him?"

"Is it the jarvey, sir? Faith, I do well. He used to live up there near me; and his name is—"

"Never mind his name," interrupted the detective. "Tell us when and where you saw him last?"

"Let me see, let me see," returned the nurse. "Let me think a moment."

"Wasn't it at the inn, out on the Donnellybrook Road the night the girl was stolen?" suggested the detective.

"Bedad, but you're right, sir," was the reply. "And be the same token, he was very free with his money the same night, for he forced me to take a glass too much; and 'twas that made me sleep so sound."

"You're sure of that, Norah?"

"Certain and sure, sir. How could I forget it; and the poor girl whipped away the same night. Did he have any hand in it, sir?"

"Never mind about that, Norah," replied O'Malley. "You can go home now. Hayes, will you please bring that hackman in here?"

"Now, my fine fellow," commenced O'Malley, in a stern voice, as he glanced fiercely at the trembling cabman, "you've been getting yourself into a fine scrape haven't you?" 'Tis a serious matter, my fine fellow, as you will find out."

"What will I do at all, at all?" cried the terrified wretch as he commenced to sob. "Sure, I'll put you on the track of the villains now; and 'twill be an aisy matter for you to take them for they make off out of the country. Oh, sir, don't be too hard on me."

"Where are they?" demanded O'Malley.

"They were out at the old farmhouse till ere yesterday morning, sir. And then they made off after the young girl."

"Ha," cried the detective. "Then the girl escaped from them again. How was that?"

The hackman related the particulars of Eileen's escape; and also gave an account of the manner in which she had shot Billy the Barge.

"The brave creature," cried O'Malley. "'Tis a pity she didn't shoot the greater scoundrel. What then, sirrah? Did the villain follow her?"

"He tore down the lane like a madman, sir," replied the hackman, "when he heard what happened. And we didn't see any more of him till near morning, when he came back looking black enough to eat us all up."

"Did he bring the girl back with him?" inquired the detective, anxiously.

"Indeed he didn't, sir. And that's what made him so wild, altogether. But he swore he'd have her again, if he had to follow her to her father's door."

"The scoundrel," cried the detective. "Well, what did he do, and where did he go then?"

"I made out, sir, from the talk they had between them that he traced the girl, after looking for her all night, down to the inn at the village. And he wanted me, right or wrong, to go down with him at once, and help him to get her back again."

"You were paid well for your trouble, I'll go bail," remarked the detective.

"Only a trifle, sir."

"Well, well, you'll have to go to prison and stand your trial, now," said O'Malley. "The inspector here will have the charge entered against you. Don't trouble us any more, man."

And the terrified hackman, in spite of his protestations, was led away to prison. "And, now, sir," said Detective O'Malley, as he turned to the inspector, "I will start out at once in quest of these men. Please send word to young Fitzgerald and that Darby, and tell Hayes to be ready in half an hour. Aha! here comes Mrs. Dillon." "Mr. O'Malley," said the inspector's wife, as she entered the room, "come at once to see the wounded lady. She has her full senses now. And she begged of me to bring you to her at once." The detective sprang from his seat, exclaiming:

"Thank God for that, I trust she'll never lose them again. I won't delay a moment. Have the men ready here, sir; and I'll be back as soon as I can. Poor Julia, I am glad she's herself again. And so she wanted to see me, Mrs. Dillon?" "Yours was the first name she mentioned," replied the inspector's wife, as they left the room. "Ah, Richard, Richard! 'tis a great pity you ever met her at all." "'Tis a thousand pities I didn't meet her years ago," was the reply.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE MURDER OF THE BANKER, AS SEEN BY THE DESERTED WIFE.

JULIA McDERMOTT was lying on the bed in the darkened room, her head propped up with pillows, and her hands folded on her breast. The face of the beautiful creature was as pale as death, but the glorious black eyes, now fixed on the door, shone as brilliant as ever.

A female attendant was sitting at the bedside, anxiously watching the invalid. "Will they ever come?" muttered Julia, as she pressed her hand to her forehead. "I fear that my poor brain will not last much longer. And, oh! I do want to speak to Richard so much." "They're coming now, ma'am," returned the attendant. "I hear the hall door opening. Do try and compose yourself, Mrs. McDermott." "Yes, yes," muttered Julia. "I hear them on the stairs. You can retire for a while, now." An expression of supreme delight passed over the woman's face as Mrs. Dillon and Detective O'Malley entered the room together.

"Oh, Richard, Richard," said the invalid, "I'm so glad you came." "I'm rejoiced to see that you are yourself once more, Julia," returned O'Malley. "Be quiet now. Don't agitate yourself too much." As the man spoke he took the outstretched hand within his own and bent down and kissed it reverently.

"Sit down, Richard," muttered Julia. "I have something very important to tell you." "I will leave you alone, then," said Mrs. Dillon, as she turned to leave the room. "No, no, Mrs. Dillon," muttered Julia. "I have nothing to say that you should not hear. In fact, I desire that you should hear it. I am very sorry that Mr. Dillon is not present also."

"What is it that you wish to tell, Julia?" inquired O'Malley. "You are not strong yet. Don't distress yourself too much." "I must tell you—I must talk—about a matter that has been troubling me a good deal. It is concerning the murder of Mr. Parker, the banker."

"We will talk about it some other time, Julia," said O'Malley. "Don't get agitated about the subject now. We know who killed the old gentleman, and his murderer will be punished." "I must speak of it, Richard," said Julia. "I may never have a chance again—for my poor brain is wandering now; and I may never be myself again. Listen to me, I beg of you."

"Nonsense, Julia," returned O'Malley. "You will be as well as ever after a few days' quiet rest. But if you must speak, be as calm as possible." "Well, listen to me, each of you, and I won't detain you long with my story. You are now fully convinced that my false husband murdered the banker?" "We are, Julia," returned the detective. "We have not the slightest doubt about it. He did not deny it himself when I accused him of it." "You are mistaken, Richard," said Julia, in a low, earnest voice. "You are mistaken—and so is he. Thomas McDermott did not kill Mr. Parker, though he imagines that his hand struck the fatal blow." "You surprise me, Julia," exclaimed O'Malley, as he stared at the pale face before him. "What do you know—what mystery is about it? Who killed him, then? My God, is it possible that—oh, no, no! That is too horrible to think of even."

"Is it possible that I killed him, you were about to say, Richard," responded the woman, as she forced a smile to her wan features. "Oh, no, Richard. My hands are free from the crime of murder; though I did try to kill your wretched brother, thank God, I did not succeed. But listen to me calmly for awhile."

"Be calm yourself, Julia, for Heaven's sake," implored the agitated man. "I will—I will. Listen to me: You know that I called on Mr. Parker on the afternoon that I came to Dublin." "Yes, Julia; I am aware of that." "Well, I called on him for advice, as well as to get cash for a bill of exchange; and, as I had heard that he was a good, kind gentleman, I told him all about my false husband, and the mission I was engaged in. He was very much excited, and terribly incensed against Thomas McDermott, and he promised that he would do all in his power to bring the wretch to punishment. "I remained with the old gentleman until it was dark, made an appointment to call on him the next morning; and I was about to bid him good evening when a footstep in the hall outside attracted my attention."

"My God, Mr. Parker," I exclaimed, "my husband is coming in here now. That's his footstep in the hall outside." "Into the back room, quick," said the old gentleman, as he pushed me towards an inner door. "And for the life of you don't stir until he leaves. Let me deal with the scoundrel." "As he spoke he forced me into the room, closed the door on me, and turned the key in the lock to prevent any interruption on my part. "You may be sure that I was in a terrible state of excitement, as I heard the voice of the man in the outer room; and, I am sure that if I had an opportunity, I would have shot him then and there. "A little window near the ceiling in the room was open; and through it came the sound of the voices in the room outside. The moment I noticed the window I drew a chair near it, and silently stood on it, in order to look out and watch the two men as they sat at the table, engaged in earnest and angry conversation."

"I will not attempt to repeat the words uttered by them, but I was delighted to hear how the brave old gentleman denounced the scoundrel, who, I should tell you, was dismissed as an old man. You remember that I gave you an idea of the disguise on the next day."

"I remember!" said O'Malley. "And it was through your information that I was enabled to track him to the cottage on the night he fired on me."

"Well," continued Julia, "the old gentleman denounced him in a terrible way, while he was counting out the money and making an entry in his book; and I could see that my false husband was also in a fearful rage. "When Mr. Parker had the money arranged, he flung it on the table, and springing to the door, he exclaimed in a loud voice: "And now you scoundrel, you must not leave this room until you promise me that

you will forego your present wicked designs, and do justice to those you have already injured so deeply."

"My husband glared at the old gentleman for a moment, and then with a rude oath, he sprang on him, seized him by the throat, and dragged him away from the door, while at the same time he struck at him fiercely. "I drew my revolver and pointed it at the cruel wretch, but I hesitated to fire, as they were so close together, and struggling about the room, I was afraid that I would hit the noble old gentleman."

"While I held the weapon in my hand, waiting an opportunity, the old gentleman, now fairly enraged, seized a knife, that was lying on the table, and attempted to strike his assailant with it; but Thomas forced it out of his grasp, and then struck him an awful blow with his clenched hand on the head, sending him reeling on the floor. "He stood for a moment gazing down on the insensible old gentleman, and then he exclaimed: "Gracious heavens! I've killed him. This is awful. I must fly from here at once."

"As he uttered these words he flung the knife upon the table, grasped the bills, and rushed out of the room, while I was so terrified that I could not fire at him or say a word."

"You say he struck with his hand, Julia," interrupted the detective. "Why the murdered man was stabbed in the breast. I saw the wound myself."

"Thomas McDermott struck him with his hand only," returned Julia. "He did not use the knife at all, as you will learn." "That's strange," muttered the detective. "The strangest part of all remains to be told," continued the woman. "Listen to me. "As I was saying, I was so terribly excited that I could neither speak nor act; only stand there at the little window, like one dazed, and look down at the insensible old man, while I trembled to think that he had met his death at the hands of the men who had so much to answer for already." The invalid paused a moment, and drew a long breath.

"You are exhausted, Julia," said O'Malley, as he pressed the hand he held within his own. "Rest for a while ere you say any more."

"Oh, no," was the hurried reply. "I must tell you all now. I may never have an opportunity again. Let me see—I was speaking of the time my husband ran out of the room, leaving Mr. Dillon insensible on the floor. Now, listen again. I was standing at the window, striving to make up my mind what to do, when the door was opened again, and a man stole silently into the room. By the light of the lamp that was burning brightly on the mantelpiece, I recognized the fellow as the wretch of a boatman who had assisted Thomas in bearing Eileen McMahon away in the yacht."

"Aha!" cried the detective, growing intensely excited. "So that scoundrel had a hand in it."

"'Twas that villain murdered the old gentleman," replied Julia. "Listen to me patiently, till I tell you what followed."

With wondering eyes and heads bend down to catch every syllable, Detective O'Malley and Mrs. Dillon listened eagerly to the words of the invalid. "The man entered the room, and the moment his eyes fell on the old gentleman, he exclaimed: "Ha, ha. I thought the gentleman was up to some mischief here from the way he made off and the wild look that was in his eyes. Won't I have a hold on him now; and won't I make him bleed for this. In the meantime, I might as well grab this money, and be off with it. I suppose me fine gentleman forgot it after him in his hurry. 'Twill be a fortune to me, at all events."

"As the rascal spoke, he took up a roll of bills that was lying on the table, placed them in an inside breast pocket and then turned to take another look at the old gentleman on the floor. I was about to call on the robber to put the money back, when Mr. Dillon sprang up suddenly, and, seizing him by the collar, exclaimed: "Place that money on the table again, you scoundrel. How dare you steal in here to rob me?"

"The man appeared to be thunderstruck for a moment or two at this sudden interruption; while I was rejoiced to know that the old gentleman was only stunned for the time."

"Mister—Mister—my master—sent me back for the money he forgot," stammered forth the thief.

"Let the scoundrel come himself," cried the old gentleman. "Put that money down."

"The man drew the bills from his pocket with great reluctance; and he was about to place them on the table when his eye caught the knife laying there. Then, as quick as thought, he grasped the weapon and plunged it into the old gentleman's breast."

"Gracious heavens!" exclaimed the detective. "'Twas this wretch killed Mr. Parker then. And I could have hung my own brother for the crime. Why did you not tell me this before, Julia?"

"I may never see you again, Richard," murmured the woman, as the tears swelled up into her brilliant eyes. "I may never speak another word to you. But I will bless you while I may; and I pray to God that your life may be happy hereafter." "Don't speak in that way Julia," cried the man. "We will meet again."

"I never want to lay my eyes on Thomas again," continued Julia. "But if you should ever see him, tell him that I forgive him; and beg of him from me, if he escapes punishment, to atone for his crimes. And now, Richard, I will bid you good-bye. My brain is reeling. I need rest and quiet." Richard McDermott bent down and kissed the forehead of the woman he loved so dearly; and then, muttering some broken exclamations, the strong man rushed from the room.

"Now," he cried as he ascended the stairs, "to hunt down the two scoundrels. Well, well. To think that this rascally boatman killed the banker, and not Thomas. My theory was not quite correct after all."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE WELCOME AT THE OLD HOMESTEAD.

It is night once more in the old homestead on the banks of the Shannon, and the aged old couple are seated by the blazing fire, while Kathleen is sewing at a

table. "Will Gerald come to-night, Kathleen?" inquired Mr. McMahon, as he looked up from the fire. "'Tis almost time we heard from Maurice again."

"He promised to come, father," replied the young girl. "And he said he expected a letter from Maurice, too." "God grant that he sends some good news at last," muttered the old farmer. "I will go in search of my child myself to-morrow. If I don't hear some good tidings. This suspense will soon kill me."

"We'll have to trust in God," muttered the wife. "And something tells me that all our prayers have been heard. 'Tis a long time we had of it, but our darling will come back to us again."

"Here comes Gerald now," cried Kathleen, as she sprang up from her seat. "Come in, man, come in," cried the old farmer. "Don't stand knocking at our door. Aha, Gerald. What news? Did you get a letter?" The young man flung his hat and stick on the table, as he replied:

"To be sure I did, sir. And there's great news in it entirely." "What of Eileen?" cried the old man, as he sprang from his chair, and clasped the young man's hand. "Oh, Gerald, tell me that she's safe, and out of the power of that fiend of hell." "I believe she's safe and sound, sir," replied Gerald, in a joyous voice. "Wait till you hear what Maurice has to say in the letter. Here it is." As the young man spoke, he drew a folded letter from his pocket, held it to the light and commenced:

"DEAR BROTHER:—I have some good news for you at last, thank goodness. Tell Mr. and Mrs. McMahon, and Kathleen, and all the friends, that Eileen will be home with them very soon. She escaped from the villain the other night, and made her way for home as well as she could, poor thing. Tom McDermott, the scoundrel, and Billy the Barge, followed her, and we are following after them. That is, Mr. O'Malley, another officer, Darby and myself. We've just traced them all here to the city of Limerick, where I'm now writing to you. You may expect Eileen down with you at any moment, as we understand she has managed to give them the slip, and we are close on the heels of the villains. They can't escape us, no matter how they'll twist and turn, for Mr. O'Malley is up to every move; and, oh, Gerald, but you never saw a man in such dead earnest as he is."

"I won't say any more now, as I'll see you all in a day or two; and I'm in a great hurry to be off on the chase once more. There's a great load off my heart, for the day is brightening."

"Your loving brother, MAURICE FITZGERALD." "God be praised," cried the old man, as he lifted his hands and eyes to heaven. "God be praised that my darling is safe at last." "Where is she, Gerald?" cried the mother, as she grasped the young man's arm, and looked eagerly into his face. "I know by your looks that you saw her. Oh, where is my own Eileen Alanna, till I clasp her to my bosom?"

"I did see her, ma'am," cried the young man, joyously, while his face was aglow with happiness. "She'll be here presently. Try and contain yourself."

"She's here now," rang out a well-known voice at the door. "Eileen—Eileen, my own darling Eileen Alanna—welcome, welcome. A thousand welcomes back to your own home again."

Then the next moment the door was thrown open, and Eileen flung herself, laughing and sobbing, into her mother's arms. You should have heard the joyous exclamations that burst from Kathleen and her father and mother, as they embraced the wanderer.

You should have witnessed the beaming faces as the tears of gratitude and happiness flowed down their cheeks.

And you should have seen Eileen's pale face as sobbing and laughing at the same time, she flew from one embrace to another, muttering: "Father—mother—Kathleen. Did you think that I'd never come back to you again?"

Yet, even at that moment of supreme happiness, a dark scowling face peered in at the window. The dark stranger was down in that peaceful valley once more, and he was again a fugitive, flying from the vengeance of the law. He had followed Eileen from town to town, and even to the home that he had made desolate before. And now as the hunted girl nestled safely in the home of her childhood, as the joyous welcome fell on her ears, the dark stranger glared in at her from the window, while he mentally vowed that he would win her yet, or die in the attempt. As Thomas McDermott stands there, looking in at the happy group, the rattle of an approaching vehicle falls on his ear, and he hastens away into the shelter of the little grove at the back of the house. The inmates of the old homestead also heard the approaching vehicle, and Gerald Fitzgerald runs to the door, just as it entered the yard.

A shout of welcome, a joyous response, and Maurice dashes into the house, followed by Darby, Detective O'Malley, and the other officer. "Eileen, Eileen!" he cried, as he clasped the weeping girl in his embrace. "Thank God, you're safe at last."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE DARK STRANGER IN THE VALLEY AGAIN.

"Sit down, sit down, gentlemen," cried Mr. McMahon, as he turned to O'Malley and his associate. "Make yourself at home in my house this night—for you are heartily welcome. Darby, my lad, I'm glad to see you once more. So, 'twas you all brought my darling Eileen home to me at last." "Faith—no, sir," replied Darby. "We were following her all the time; but she was too fast for us. She bated the hounds we was after, and they bated us. But we tracked them down here to the glen again." "What!" cried Mr. McMahon "is it possible that the villains have faced here again?" "Yes," Mr. McMahon, replied O'Malley. "Thomas McDermott and the scoundrel you call Billy the Barge are somewhere in the valley to-night. But don't annoy yourself about them. They are sur-

rounded and watched on all sides. We will take them in the morning." "I knew they were following me all the time," said Eileen, with a shudder. "Oh, Maurice—Gerald, don't let the villains take me away again. I tremble to think that he is near me now."

"Don't be troubled, darling," said Maurice. "You have one—you have more than one—near to guard you now. Oh, what a fool I was to ever leave you at all. But we will love one another all the same, Eileen, for the dark days we have spent apart. "Yes, yes, Maurice," murmured the young girl, "'twas a dark, stormy night when you left me. And, oh, it has been so much like a horrible dream ever since. But the light has come at last, Maurice. Forgive me, if my love ever wandered from you for a moment. I wasn't myself at all while the cloud was on me."

"Don't say another word about it, darling," cried Maurice. "The Lord knows you've suffered enough this while past. And so you shot Billy the Barge in the leg, Eileen?" "I'm sorry 'twasn't in his heart," cried Darby. "But I'll pay him and that other scoundrel yet. Won't we, Mr. O'Malley?" "That's what we are down here for, Darby," replied the detective. "And that reminds me that I would like to take a walk down by the banks of the river this fine night." Wait till you eat and drink, sir," said Mr. McMahon. "This is a night of great joy," entirely, in my house, and you must be all tired after your long ride. Hurry up with the things, girls."

In a very short time, a substantial meal was placed on the table, and Detective O'Malley and his friends were entertained by the happy host and his family.

"And where is the poor lady that left here with you, Maurice?" inquired Mr. McMahon. "She's not well, sir," was the reply. "We had to leave her in Dublin." "The villain shot her," muttered Darby. "What's that?" cried the old farmer. "You don't mean to say that Thomas McDermott shot his wife." "Yes, sir," returned the detective, in a stern voice, as he glanced at Eileen.

"Where—where?" was the old man's inquiry. "My God, what an outlawed wretch he must be altogether, to try to kill the poor woman that he wronged so much before." "She forgives him," replied the detective. "But 'tis more than I can do. Come, Darby, let us take that stroll now. Come, Hayes."

As O'Malley spoke, he withdrew from the hospitable board, and approached the side-table, on which his hat was lying.

"Sure, you're not going in search of them, to-night sir?" inquired Gerald. "This very instant," was the reply. "Then Maurice and I will go with you," cried Gerald. "I have an old score to settle with him, and Billy the Barge, too." "No—no—no," cried Detective O'Malley. "You both remain where you are, and look to the folks here. I know that these desperate men are in this neighborhood now. And I know that they are mad enough to make another attempt to carry off Eileen. I believe they followed her to this very door." "The Lord have mercy on that dark stranger if he ever crosses my door again," cried the old farmer. As Mr. McMahon uttered these words he seized a gun that was hanging over the mantelpiece, and laid on the table. "I've kept this loaded ever since the night he stole my child from me. And woe be to him if he ever darkens this door again."

"Make your mind easy about that, sir," said Maurice Fitzgerald. "Eileen is safe now here beside me. And 'twill be queer indeed, if I'm not able to protect her. My God, Mr. O'Malley what's the matter?"

"There's the villain now," cried the detective. And the next moment the report of two pistols startled the inmates of the old farm-house.

The detective had fired at the window—where he had seen the face of his brother glaring in on them.

The other shot was fired by the daring, infatuated man, and it was aimed at the young girl for whom he had risked so much. In a moment all was confusion and uproar. Darby uttered a wild yell, as he drew a pistol and sprang to the door, followed by Officer Hayes and Gerald Fitzgerald. Eileen uttered a cry of terror, as she sank into the arms of Maurice Fitzgerald.

Mr. McMahon seized his gun, and, taking his stand beside the fainting girl, cried out: "Now let the villain show his face." "Is any one injured?" rang out the clear voice of the detective. "She's only fainted, sir," returned Maurice. "The ball whistled by my ear. Hold her, Kathleen. Bring her to, Mrs. McMahon, while I go after the born fiend of hell." "Stay where you are, and guard her," cried Detective O'Malley, "and leave vengeance to me. Thank God, that he has not committed another crime." And the next moment the man followed his companion out into the yard. "The man must be mad," muttered the detective, as he looked about the yard. "He is rushing on to his own destruction. Now, then, to put an end to this work at once." "Mr. O'Malley! Mr. O'Malley!" cried Darby from the boathouse, "come here, quick! There they are, making off in the boat." The detective ran down to the bank of the river as fast as possible. "They've escaped us again, sir," cried Gerald, as he pointed to the boat out in the stream. "They've taken Mr. McMahon's boat, and there isn't another one within two miles of here. What will we do?"

"Do," returned the detective. "Follow them along the shore on horseback. Out with the horses at once. We must capture them to-night." As the detective spoke, he stood on the banks of the river and gazed out on the receding boat. At that moment the form of the dark stranger was seen to rise in the boat, as he raised his hat and shouted defiantly:

"Do your worst now, the whole of you. If I can't have Eileen McMahon, nobody else can. Maurice Fitzgerald, Gerald, Richard, I defy you all. And I laugh at you. Ha, ha, ha!" "The man is mad," cried the detective. "He thinks he has shot the girl. Quick—quick—out with the horses at once. They cannot escape to sea in that boat, and there's not a spot along the shore where they can hide long. Something tells

me that this long chase will soon be ended." "I'll follow them on foot, sir," cried Darby. "And who knows but I'll find a boat for you before I go far." "Away, away, then, in God's name," cried O'Malley, as he continued to gaze after the boat. "Ha—here are the horses. Now, Gerald, Hayes, for a last chase after the scoundrels." "I led the first one after them, sir," cried Gerald, as he thought of the desperate struggle on the night when the stranger bore Eileen away, "and I thank God that I'm in the last."

CHAPTER XXX.

HOW THE DARK STRANGER MADE BILLY THE BARGE A WILLING SLAVE.

WHEN Thomas McDermott dashed out of the farmhouse near Dublin to go in search of Eileen, his mind was in a state of commotion bordering on frenzy.

"You're mad, sir," said Billy. "Yes, I am mad, Billy. And I've passed through enough to make a dozen men mad. But I'll not leave the country without Eileen McMahon. And you must help me to the bitter end." "Begorra," cried Billy. "I was near murdered myself by that mad girl, and I won't go near her again." "See here, you villain," replied the dark stranger, "it is time that you understood me. A moment ago, you said that I was mad. Don't you know that madmen are dangerous?"

"You wouldn't hurt me, sir," whined Billy. "I've tried to serve you faithfully." "Bah," was the contemptuous rejoinder, "I'm not so mad or foolish as not to understand you. I know that you are but waiting a chance to betray me. But you want to steel and plunder all you can first. You talk of murder. Didn't you try to kill your own son?"—"You put me up to it, sir,"—"Not I," was the impetuous reply. "Not I, you villain. 'Twas my money. Now, listen to me a moment, and while you listen, look at this revolver."

As the stranger spoke he drew the weapon from his pocket and pointed it full at the trembling wretch.

"For God's sake, don't murder me, sir," he pleaded in the most abject tones. "Put the pistol down, and I'll do any thing you bid me." "Listen to me," continued the stranger, "and don't speak another word until you hear what I have to say." "I'm listening, sir. For mercy sake, don't kill me." "You remember the day that we were cast ashore at Kingston? You remember that on the evening of that day I went to Mr. Parker's to draw a large sum of money that was due me?"—"I do, sir."—"Well, I remember it also. And I remember some thing more that you may have forgotten," continued the stranger, with an ominous frown. "He was murdered that same evening, sir," said Billy, with a malicious smile.

The eye of the stranger was still on Billy, as he continued: "And now my honest and faithful friend, will you be kind enough to lay the money on the table. You will find it in that pocket on the inside of what you call your waistcoat. Out with it, quick, or by heavens I'll blow your brains out."

"What are ye up to at all, sir?" cried the wretch, as he drew forth some money from his pockets and flung it on the table. "Faith, 'tis aisy to see that you are mad intirely now."—"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the stranger. "And I'm mad—you think. Well, if I am, there's a little method in my madness, as you will see. In a few words, Billy, you must know that I don't trust you any more."

Now you have not a penny in the world, and you have been engaged in enterprises with me that would consign you to prison at least—if not to the gallows."

"I didn't kill anyone," remonstrated Billy. "Oh, what's the use in wasting time in this way," cried the stranger, impatiently. "There's the door, man; make off as soon as you please, and give information against me: and then we'll see what good it will do you."

"You'd shoot me afore I got to the door," cried the trembling wretch. "As dead as a dog," was the stern reply. "What do you want me to do then?" inquired Billy, as he glared at the deadly revolver. "I want you to come with me in search of Eileen McMahon," was the reply. "I am going to follow her, as I told you before, back to her father's house if necessary. I want you to obey me in everything, without a word of remonstrance. Do this, and this roll of bills is yours. Make the slightest attempt to betray me, and I will send a bullet through your head at once. Do you understand me at last? Is it a bargain?" "Faith, sir," was the reply, "you don't give me much choice in the matter. I can't afford to lose my life now, for 'tis all I've got. I will go with you, in God's name, and I'm thinking 'tis the Ould Boy's luck we'll have in the end."

"I'll risk that," cried the stranger, with a laugh, as he put up his pistol. "And now, Billy, remember that if anything happens me—if I fall by any other hand than yers—every dollar I have about me belongs to you. If I succeed in bearing Eileen McMahon away with me, and you remain faithful to me, I will make a rich man of you." "I won't trust you," thought the boatman, "but I'll watch me chance. 'Tis a long lane that has no turn, me bold lad."

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE LAST CHASE ON THE SHANNON SIDE.

To all appearances Billy the Barge was now as abject and as humble a slave as ever bent knee to sultan or kaiser.

And yet there was a burning feeling of vengeance in his heart against the dark stranger; and calmly and patiently did he wait the opportunity of gratifying it. On through the country after Eileen the pretended drover and pedler tramped, the one intent on recovering his lost love, the other scheming for vengeance and the possession of a fortune. When Eileen reached the city of Limerick, the stranger and his companion were scarcely an hour behind her. It took some time to trace her in this large city, especially as they had to use great caution in eluding the police, who were on the lookout for them. Down into the

valley of the Shannon they followed the flying girl, and when Gerald Fitzgerald led her to the door of her old home, the dark stranger and Billy were at their heels.

It will be remembered that Eileen had seized and carried away Billy's pistol on the night when she used it so effectually on the villain, and Thomas McDermott took good care that his slave should not be supplied with another weapon. When the infatuated man glared in at the window and saw Eileen once more in the homestead, his first impulse was to dash into the house, shoot Gerald and the old farmer, if necessary, and then bear the girl off to the boat, where Billy lay in wait, ready to push off down the river.

The arrival of Maurice and his friends compelled him to retreat to the boat house; and there it was that Billy knew without a doubt that he had to deal with a madman. "I can't get her now," cried the stranger; "but I can kill her." "Oh, Lord, sir," cried Billy, "don't think of such a thing at all. Let us make away in the boat here; and we'll hide in the cave below till we get a chance to make out of the country. I knew 'twould be madness to follow her down here." "By the living fiend," cried the man, as he foamed with rage, "I'll never leave her to that country clown, Maurice Fitzgerald. I don't care what becomes of me now, and you can go off as soon as you wish in the boat, for I won't leave here till I've shot Eileen McMahon."

"Have your own way, sir," he replied. "I'd stand a poor chance of making off without you, and not a penny in me pocket to face the world with; but it's awful to think of killing the poor thing—for all she shot at me the other night."

"Maurice Fitzgerald, or any other man living, won't have her if I can't," muttered the stranger. "Remain here awhile for me. Have the boat ready to push off when I come again," and the desperate man stole silently up to the house, to take a last look at Eileen Alanna, to make a final attempt at destroying the peace of those who had sheltered him in his hour of peril. Looking in at the window, he saw the brother he had so cruelly wronged, and who was now hunting him down as he would a beast of prey. He saw Maurice Fitzgerald, the friend whom he had betrayed, basking in the smiles of the girl whom he had loved so dearly. The dark stranger saw the smiling faces of the father and mother, and he saw the exultant looks on the countenances of Gerald and Kathleen. He listened to the inquiries concerning his wounded, suffering wife; and he heard his brother's words as he spoke of that wife's forgiveness, and of his own determination to bring the culprit to punishment.

One more look at Eileen, and the deadly weapon is raised and aimed at the fair girl. At that moment his brother's keen eye has caught the ominous face at the window, and his ready hand has grasped his own weapon. The revolvers are fired almost simultaneously, and the stranger beholds Eileen falling, apparently lifeless, into the arms of her lover, while her agonized cry rings in his ear. "Ha, ha!" cries the desperate man, as he dashes to the shelter of the shrubbery. "Ha! ha!—I've conquered at last. Eileen will never be another's. And now for escape or death—and the latter is the most welcome for me."

"Now, Billy," cried the stranger, as he took his seat in the stern of the boat, "pull away as fast as you can."

"And where will I pull to, sir?"

"To the devil if you like, for all I care," roared the excited man. "Ha! ha! ha! 'Tis very likely we'll fetch up in the lower regions before morning. But we've got plenty of funds to see us through. Pull on, Billy, pull on." "Merciful Father," returned the terrified wretch, "but I'm in an awful scrape. And 'tis getting pitch dark, too. I'll pull for the cove. They'll never think of looking for us there, and who knows but I may give him the slip before morning." The night, as Billy remarked, was growing quite dark, and the occupants of the boat could not discern their pursuers on the shore. All the strength and skill of the boatman was now directed in reaching the cove where Maurice encountered the dark stranger on the night of his return to the valley from America.

"Strike a light, then, and I'll give you what I promised you. We may not be alive in the morning, and I want to keep my word with you." Billy was rejoiced at hearing this speech; and, when they entered the dark cave, he immediately set about procuring a light. "'Tis asier than I expected," thought the old wretch, "if he don't change his mind." "There you are, Billy," cried the stranger, as he pulled out the roll of bills and placed them in the hands of the greedy boatman. "There's the money you stole from me, and two hundred pounds besides. Now, go,—and leave me alone forever." "Go where, sir?" cried Billy. "Go to the devil out of here," yelled the man. "Quick, or I'll send a bullet through that miserable heart of yours this minute."

As the stranger spoke, he drew his revolver and presented it at the terrified boatman.

"Oh Lord," cried Billy, as he turned and dashed out of the cavern. "He's mad intirely. His eyes is fairly starting out of his head. He'll put an end to himself before the morning."

The craven wretch did not pause till he reached the boat, and then he muttered:

"And sure if he does kill himself, mightn't I as well have the rest of the money, as to leave it to rot in that place? I'll stale back and see what he's up to."

With cautious steps the boatman approached the mouth of the cavern and peered in.

The stranger stood in the same position as before, and the revolver was still in his hand.

"The desperate game is played and lost," he cried, as he raised the revolver and held it to his temple. "And there's nothing to live for now."

"'Tis just as I expected," muttered Billy the Barge. "He is going to murder himself, and then I can grab every penny of his money."

"But no," continued the stranger, as he lowered the weapon from his temple, "I'll take one more look on the face of Eileen. I'll steal to the house in the morning, and I'll end my life while looking on her pale face. Eileen—Eileen—I'll be with you to-morrow."

"Blood and thunder," muttered Billy. "He's not goin to kill himself after all, and I'm dished out of the rest of the money. Be heavens, I won't be. I'll have it, if I was to steal it from him when he's asleep."

The stranger drew his coat about him, and flung himself on the damp ground, muttering:

"I'll rest till morning. My head is bursting."

The boatman saw that he placed his revolver on the ground beside him, and he muttered:

"If I could manage to grab that 'twould be small matter whether I would put him out of the way or not. By heavens, but I'll try."

Crouching there at the entrance of the cavern, Billy the Barge, like a tiger waiting to spring on its prey, watched the dark stranger as he fell into an uneasy, delirious slumber.

Growing impatient at length, and anxious to secure the money, he advanced cautiously to the side of the unconscious man, and then, stooping down, he grasped the weapon at his side. In lifting the pistol, the clumsy wretch touched the hair trigger, and a barrel of the revolver exploded. With a cry of rage the stranger sprang to his feet, and clutched the intruder by the throat. "Ha, you scoundrel," he said, as he glared at the boatman with his fiery eyes, "you wasn't satisfied with what I gave you. You want all, eh? Now then, you villain, let us see how you will fight for your life, for I am going to kill you." "I'll kill you first," hissed the wretch, as he placed the revolver to the stranger's breast and fired. Thomas McDermott uttered a cry of agony as he relaxed his grasp and then fell to the ground. "Now for the rest of the money," yelled the murderer, as he bent over the fallen man. "Ha! ha! ha! I paid ye for yer trick on me at last, me fine gentleman. Now for the fortune, and then—'For the gallows!' rang out the clear voice of Detective O'Malley. The next moment the guilty, greedy wretch was hurled to the ground beside his victim, and before he could raise his weapon again, strong hands were on him.

"Oh, murder, murder," shouted Billy, as he burst out into tears. "I'm gone forever. Oh, what a fool I was that I didn't make off when I had the chance." "You couldn't, dad," cried Darby, as he confronted his wretched father. "I have had me eye and me pistol on ye ever since ye come here. Do ye mind the night the pair of ye threw me, bound hand and foot as I was, into the river beyond. I swore then that I'd hunt ye to the death, and I've kept me oath. The black stranger is dead, Mr. O'Malley." The detective stood over his dead brother for some moments, and a softened expression stole over his stern face, as he muttered: "Julia is avenged at last, and not by my hand. May God forgive you your sins—your great crimes—Thomas McDermott. It is not for me to curse you at such a time as this. May God have mercy on your soul."

"Amen," muttered Gerald Fitzgerald. "And, thank heaven, his blood is not on my hands." "I didn't want to kill him," whined Billy the Barge; "but he put me to it."

"Ye wanted the rest of his money, that was all, dad," said Darby, "and much good may it do you now. 'Tis me that don't pity ye. I'll dance with glee the day ye swing from the gallows." "Ye unnatural baste," cried the handcuffed wretch. "Yer not my son at all."

"If I was, ye'd never try to kill me," returned Darby, as he glared at the boatman. "But son or no son, I renounced you long ago."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE DAWNING OF THE DAY—WAITING FOR THE DAWN.

THREE months have passed away since the night on which the dark stranger met his doom on the banks of the River Shannon. In the old homestead in the valley there is sunshine and happiness once more, while up in the village of Dunmore the joy-bells are ringing quite merrily. 'Tis the joyous wedding morning, and the friends of the McMahons and the Fitzgeralds have assembled at the farmhouse to celebrate the double wedding. During the three months that intervened since the fatal night, Eileen McMahon could not banish from her mind the remembrance of the terrible agony she endured while in the power of Thomas McDermott. Though she knew his bones were lying in the old churchyard at Dunmore, she often fancied that he was by her side again, and in her dreams he would appear to her, as on the night when he sought refuge in the old homestead. But on this bright morning, when the merry bells were ringing, the old light of bygone days came back to her eyes, and bright was her smile as she gave her hand to Maurice Fitzgerald, and uttered the words that united them forever. Kathleen and Gerald exchanged joyous smiles as they saw the look of supreme happiness in Eileen's face, for they knew that she would soon forget the dark cloud that had threatened her young life.

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Years have passed away, and still peace and plenty is to be found in that old homestead. Eileen Alanna still lives with her father and mother, for Maurice has charge of the farm. Eileen's voice is heard at night, as she sings the old songs to soothe her child to slumber. The old folks sit by the fireside, and talk of the days of their youth, as they listen to Eileen while. Darby the Rambler is a rambler no more, for he has found a home with Maurice Fitzgerald. Darby is very fond of the old songs that Eileen sings, but he notes that she never attempts "Maggie Macchree." Billy the Barge is a convict on Spike Island. He escaped the gallows, from the fact that Julia McDermott could not testify against him as to the murder of Mr. Parker.

In a private asylum near Dublin a beautiful woman is residing, and day after day a weary-looking man attends her in her rambles through the garden and the orchard. No mother ever watched over a child with more tender care and affection than that strong man watches over that helpless, demented creature. That crazed woman is Julia McDermott, and the faithful watcher is Detective O'Malley.

"While there is life there is hope."

And day by day while life remains, that devoted man will watch and pray.

After nights of anguish and despair, Eileen Alanna has seen "the dawning of the day." Let us hope that the light of reason will yet break on the deserted wife of the dark stranger.

THE END.

93 LOVE'S VICTORY. By B. L. Farjeon.

94 THE QUIET HEART. By Mrs. Oliphant.